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ISHMAEL TO DANIEL



**THE REPRESENTATIVE  
MEN OF THE BIBLE**

*Ishmael to Daniel*

BY

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## PREFACE

IN this second instalment it is perhaps expedient that I should repeat so much of my original Preface as is descriptive of the plan I have adopted in delineating the Bible Characters.

By 'The Representative Men of the Bible' I mean the men of the Bible who represent phases of humanity irrespective of place and time; and I consider them only in those incidents in which they are thus representative. These studies are not historical; they are not critical; they are an analysis of the Portraits *as we see* them—without any attempt to inquire how or when they came. I have imagined myself in a studio, looking at the forms as delineated, and simply asking the question, What did the artist mean? Personally, I have no doubt as to the historical basis

for the patriarchal life—not to speak of lives further down the stream. But I have been actuated in the meantime by the desire to find ground that is neutral to the two extremes—the Higher Criticism on the one hand and the Old Orthodoxy on the other. That common ground is the fact that the figures are now before us, and that, if there be a Revelation, it is through them, in the last result, that the Revelation must come. Here, for the present, hands may be joined, here, for the time, views may be united; and those who differ as to dates and origins can meet in the recognition of a spiritual beauty. I have sought to give the book a semi-devotional tone by closing each chapter with a short invocation or prayer.

I offered the former series of studies as an experiment. I promised that if it met with acceptance I would issue another series of Bible Portraits covering nearly the same period but representing distinct qualities. I am glad that a rapid reception on the part of the public and a favourable recognition by the

press has enabled me to fulfil this design. I call this a second series rather than a second volume. Any one who has not read the first may, if he will, begin with the second. Here and there I have made a reference to the previous series; but in every case it is passing and fugitive, and does not for a moment interrupt the context. The sequence of the volumes is of the less consequence because I do not think that either in this or the previous series I have ever struck the same note twice. The selection of Representative Characters has been in my own hands, and it has been made on the principle that each personality shall exhibit a phase of human nature which has not been exhibited in the Portraits that have preceded it. The strength of the Bible Gallery lies not in the number but in the variety of its representations, and its highest artistic claim must ever be, that on the canvas of human life it has succeeded in delineating 'the manifold wisdom of God.'

G. M.



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## CHAPTER I

### ISHMAEL THE OUTCAST

IN the lands of the Western world there is a type that has always been greatly admired—the unconventional man. The West is the atmosphere of freedom. It is the home of progress, the nursery of the new. To step from the line of routine, to initiate a fresh idea, to be recognised as in some sense out of the common, has been in the West a prevalent object of ambition. But in the lands of the East it has been otherwise. Here, the greatest glory is to be time-worn, antiquated, unrepaired. Enter any national gallery of the old world, you will find many noble qualities represented. But there is one type of man whom you will *not* find represented—the man who diverges from the traditions of the past. All the figures of these galleries repudiate

independence. None wishes to be deemed original, none wants to be thought an innovator on former days. Confucius tells you he is merely a restorer. Lāo-tsze tells you he is following the old 'fixed way.' Buddha tells you he is but one of *many* incarnations. China worships her ancestors, India reverences her caste; and with both the reason is the same—the sense that the old is better than the new and that the path of wisdom must ever lie upon the lines traced by our fathers.

But there is one exception to this rule of the ancient world. It occurs in that one gallery which is *not* national—the Portraits of Israel. Here, as elsewhere in the East, there is a reverence for the past; the Garden of Eden lies in the background, and the times of old are the times of glory. But here, unlike those other galleries lit by the rising sun, there is a place prepared for divergent forms. I say 'a place prepared.' It is not merely that the men outside the caste have their names recorded—*India* would have done that. The peculiarity of the Hebrew Gallery is not that

it has recorded the names of its rejected portraits; it lies in the fact that it has admitted portraits which have been rejected elsewhere. It has made room for those diverging forms which the artists of neighbouring lands have cast as rubbish to the void. To drop all metaphor, Israel has from the very outset provided a place for the pariah—has opened a door of entrance to the man whom she has herself turned out. We speak of Israel as a 'peculiar' nation. So she is; and the most peculiar thing about her is just her tolerance of peculiarities not her own. We are apt to think of this as an exclusive attribute of Gospel times. It is not; the Gospel is its flower, but you will find this tolerance at the *root*. Christianity was not a revolution; it was a culmination, a climax. It brought to the surface what had long been slumbering underground. It was to Judaism what the autumn is to the spring—a manifestor, a discloser. You will see its germs in Genesis, its examples in Exodus, its precepts in the Prophets. Not without reason in the plan of Providence was

the land of Judah chosen as the theatre of that Gospel whose province it is to gather the waifs and strays of humanity. No other soil was so prepared for such a seed.

As the representative of this outlawed class, I have selected a very early portrait—the portrait of Ishmael. He is the Great Gallery's first pariah, its first outcast from society. *Cain* was not an outcast from society; there was no society in his day; *his* banishment was from the presence of the Lord. But Ishmael was born in an age of culture, in a scene of culture. He came into the world when the world—the Hebrew world, at least—had begun to be social. Brotherhood was in the air, family life was in the air. A section of mankind had formed the bold and grand design of transforming the idea of empire into the idea of a household. They had begun to call the king their 'father.' That is the root idea of patriarchal government—that the names of sovereign and subject should be replaced by the names of father and son. To be banished from such a society was ostracism indeed.

To any man who had breathed the patriarchal atmosphere the expulsion from that atmosphere was death in the desert. It was to exchange the home for the highway, the brotherhood of man for the breath of misanthropy. No modern condition of exile can represent the exile of a man put out of the patriarchal caste. Modern exile is a change of land, but it need not be a loss of the old country's sympathy. Expulsion from the patriarchal fold was not necessarily a change of land at all; the outcast could live within sight of his former home—is it not written of Ishmael himself, 'He shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.' But the sting lay in the fact that the brotherhood itself was broken. The banishment was not one of space; it was one of spirit. It was a separation from sympathy, an isolation from interest. The man might live in the presence of his brethren, but he must live as a stranger to them. He had become a mere individual. He had no family tie, no blood of kinship. He was divided from his comrades of the

past by something more impassable than any wall—a thought of the mind.

What brought Ishmael into this exile? What has given him the distinction of being in the Great Gallery the first portrait of a pariah? As in nearly all cases of social ostracism, he owes it partly to his misfortune and partly to his fault. For one thing, he had the misfortune—for an Eastern—of being an unconventional man. He is described under the simile of a wild ass. In colloquial English that would be a term of contempt; in literary Hebrew it is a term of admiration. The idea is that of impetuous brilliancy. It depicts a man of noble impulses unable to restrain these impulses, rushing to realise his goal with wonderful, majestic, but unreasoning speed. He has nothing but his individual convictions to support him. The spirit of the age is at variance with *his* spirit. His views are not the common views. His opinions are deemed eccentric; they place him in an isolated position, in a position of general antagonism, which the narrative indicates by the prophecy

'His hand shall be against every man and every man's hand against him.' But to that position he adheres. In an age when private judgment brought ostracism, and when ostracism meant banishment from all sympathy, he bravely faced the storm. He raised his testimony against the united testimony. He set up the authority of his individual conscience in opposition to the use and wont of the whole community. His figure in the Gallery is the figure of a man in fight with all the world—outnumbered but unsubdued, proscribed but protesting still.

What was that individual conviction for which Ishmael strove? In the abstract, I think, it was something which was right. He had been born to great possessions—Messianic possessions. His mother Hagar was an Egyptian slave who had fled to the tent of Abraham and had become the handmaid to his wife Sarah. Sarah was childless, but she retained unbroken her empire over the heart of Abraham. Abraham was eager to have an heir, but he never dreamed of repudiating his

first marriage tie. He had preferred to contract an additional marriage. At the suggestion of Sarah herself he had espoused the slave Hagar; and the fruit of their union was Ishmael. But here came the sting of the position. Hagar, though a wife, was still a slave. He had not wed her to set her free, but to make her the medium in bringing an heir to *Sarah*. Ishmael was not to stand for *her* son, but for Sarah's son. Abraham was never more loyal to Sarah than in his union with Hagar. It was for Sarah he formed the union; it was for Sarah he desired posterity. When Ishmael was born he was made, officially, the child of Sarah. His real mother was denied all right to her maternity. She was only an instrument for the transmission of the kingdom. She must go back from her marriage to her drudgery, to her slavery. She must resume her menial duties to Sarah. Her seeming elevation to dignity had made it all the more needful that she should be reminded of her continued lowliness. The prospective destiny of her son Ishmael might mislead her,



might tend to make her forget that she was still a bondwoman. That fact must be recalled to her remembrance. Ishmael could only be the heir of Sarah on the supposition that Hagar was nobody—a creature without rights, a thing of goods and chattels. By word and deed the fact of her nothingness must daily, hourly, be brought home to the heart of this Egyptian.

In this atmosphere the boy Ishmael grew. He was the heir to a kingdom; and in the court of his future kingdom his mother was a down-trodden domestic slave. Was it conceivable that the heart of the boy should not burn with indignation! Measured by contemporaneous law, there was nothing unjust in the incongruity. But the unconventional man never measures anything by what is contemporaneous; he judges everything by the end of the world and how it will look *then*. Ishmael saw his actual mother in the position of a menial to his adopted mother. He saw her subjected to daily indignities. He heard in private her vehement complaints. He listened to her assertions of a right to be

equal to Sarah, of her claim to be treated as the wife of Abraham. Is it surprising that in his deepest soul he should have uttered a protest against the spirit of his age! He was a youth of noble impulses; the proof is, that he had won the heart of his father Abraham—the most chivalrous of men. Can we wonder that the depths of his nature should have risen up in antagonism to the customs of his land and the usages of his time!

By and by something happened—the unexpected happened. A real heir was born to Sarah—the child Isaac appeared. And now Ishmael was supplanted; all his hopes were withered. I do not think these hopes had all been selfish; I doubt not the youth had said to himself, ‘When I become head of the state, I will set my mother free.’ So far as he was concerned, that prospect was gone now. He should have considered, however, that, with the birth of the real heir, Sarah had no longer the same motive for keeping Hagar a slave; he should have remembered the native generosity of Abraham. He did not remember it; and

this, I think, was the fault added to his misfortune. He seems to have thrown off the mask which had hitherto concealed his irritation. His tone became mocking, satirical. What form his satire took, I cannot tell. Perhaps he sneered at the puny, delicate child on whom was to devolve the kingdom—for I have elsewhere expressed the opinion that the Isaac of the Gallery is an invalid. Perhaps he suggested that the birth was an imposture—that the child was not that of Sarah. Whatever he said was said recklessly, publicly. He used no prudence; he made no effort to hide his feelings. He selected the most prominent occasions for his invectives; he spoke where he would be overheard. I think he spoke with a view to be overheard. I believe he was tired of his equivocal position, of his mother's equivocal position; he felt humiliated by eating as a dependant the bread of which he had been born to be the dispenser. He preferred a life of independent poverty to a life of luxurious vassalage; he panted to be free.

And he got his desire. The wrath of Sarah

was kindled. She had borne acts of disobedience, she had overlooked disregard of her authority, but she could not condone a slight upon her son. She clamoured for the dismissal of the Egyptian and her boy; she bore down the unwillingness of her husband. Woman as she was, she was the ruling power in the house of Abraham. Abraham might sway the *clan*, but Sarah swayed *him*. In striking contrast to the other women of the East, this woman rises to our view as the dominant power in church and state—for church and state were then one. She rises to our view as the arbiter of national destinies, as the tribunal from which there can be no appeal. Abraham sinks before her, Mesopotamia sinks before her; her will is law. She waves her hand and says, 'Go!' and Hagar and Ishmael issue forth from the patriarchal home, to return no more. All that Abraham can do is to make secret provision for their wanderings. Silently he provides the bread and the water and sends out mother and son from the heat of Sarah's wrath into the heat of Beersheba's desert.

When they reach that desert their supply of water is exhausted. Why had Abraham not foreseen this? I think he had foreseen it. If I read rightly the meaning of the Gallery, Abraham knew that in the wilderness of Beersheba there was a well of water—that, if once they arrived there, they would find supply without limit. Yet Hagar and Ishmael came and saw not the well. Why? Simply because their nerves were unstrung. When our minds are disturbed, we miss the things that are lying at our feet. In all days, as in the days of the Gospel demoniacs, there is a blindness which comes from being possessed by violent passions. It had come to Hagar and Ishmael. Their minds were on fire with anger; their hearts were palpitating with excitement. They were too absorbed within, to see anything without. When the water in the bottle was spent, their strength was spent too; they beheld nothing but the barren sand. The mother bore up better than the son; here again the Gallery shows its respect for patriarchal womanhood! Ishmael was not

yet inured to fatigue like Hagar. He had been nurtured daintily, dandled luxuriously; he took badly to the desert; at the prospect of death by thirst, he swooned away.

But Hagar betook herself to prayer—so I read the narrative. The Egyptian mind was peculiarly religious. It lived more in another world than in this. Its finest architecture was lavished on its tombs; its finest literature is 'The Book of the Dead.' Hagar partook deeply of the spirit of her land. In her hour of emergency she retired within herself to commune with God. It was not the God of Israel she communed with; it was her own God. But, says the narrative, He *answered* her. There is no finer proof of the cosmopolitan spirit of the patriarchal age—the prayer of an outcast from Israel is answered by the God of Egypt! The answer comes, as all such answers come, in the form of an inward peace—a peace which passed understanding, which defied explanation, but which, just on that account, carried an assurance of succour. For the present, such a peace was all

that was required. It sent no supernatural vision, because that was not needed. The means of refuge lay within the limits of the natural. The well was there, had always been there. What was wanted was a mental calm adequate to the recognition of it. The peace of Divine communion *brought* that. It enabled Hagar to see, to use her faculties of natural observation; as the narrative finely puts it, 'God opened her eyes.' When she emerged from her communion, she found the old place changed. The old horror was gone—the horror of prospective thirst. She saw some vegetable product that indicated the presence of water. I do not know that she found water all at once; Divine help does not dispense with searching. But the inward peace put her on the right track for searching. It let her see where to go. It led her to fountains of living water and wiped all tears from her eyes—or rather it wiped all tears from her eyes so that she saw the living fountains.

But the grand thing—to Hagar, to Ishmael, to ourselves, was the moral bearing of the fact.

It had a historical significance. It made the voice of God say, in effect, 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold.' It declared that God had a place for the pariah—a place for the lands outside the line of Abraham. It proclaimed that the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac was still the God of Egypt and the God of Hagar. It announced that, while He had blessed the seed of the patriarch, He had also a blessing for the nations outside. The melting of that desert cloud from the eyes of Hagar was a beam of the infinite fatherhood, of the universal brotherhood—a premonition of the truth that God is larger than all our creeds and higher than all our theories. It was Hagar, not Ishmael, that had the vision—and there lies its significance. Ishmael had, after all, the blood of Abraham in his veins; Hagar belonged to a foreign faith and a foreign soil. The God who communed with a woman not included in the orthodox line was already proclaiming to the world that 'He is not far from any one of us.'

And here the narrative virtually takes leave



of Ishmael—merely stating that he rose to be a mighty hunter, that he allied himself with a daughter of Egypt, and that he transmitted an empire to his posterity. He disappears from view as rapidly as one of the steeds of his own Arabian desert. Only once in the record of Genesis do we hear his name again. It is at the end of long years, when the autumn of his life has come. But it is on an occasion so memorable and so significant that it seems a fitting place to say farewell. It is at the funeral of Abraham. There Ishmael and Isaac meet hand to hand in the presence of death. It is a strange meeting. The pariah and the prince, the man who had lost his kingdom and the man who had supplanted him, the wild undomesticated huntsman and the life immersed in the cares of the home—these at last walk side by side in the fellowship of grief. From the heart of Ishmael all bitterness is gone. In the presence of death he forgets everything but the memories of love. He remembers Abraham as the father who had loved him—who had never ceased to love him ;

the hour of his expulsion from home is drowned in that bottle of water which was provided for his sustenance. He remembers Isaac as the little delicate child who had come in his way without knowing it and who ought not to have experienced his anger. Thus death softens all our asperities. It is one of those touches of universal nature which make the whole world kin. It reveals the common frailty, and there is nothing which unites us like a sense of the common frailty. Ishmael was divided from Isaac by the thought of the mountain; they were joined again by the sight of the valley. They were constrained to walk together by the falling of the evening shadows.

Millenniums have passed since that day, and the old order has given place to the new; yet Ishmael and Isaac are walking together still. The revolving centuries have again brought them to evening-time. The empires which they founded have both been shattered. That Mohammedan power of which Ishmael was the progenitor has lost its political influence;

that Jewish sceptre which claims its dawn in Isaac is wielded among the nations no more. Yet, in the shadows, in the common ebb of their fortunes, Ishmael and Isaac still walk side by side. Bereft alike of their political significance, stript alike of their physical glories, Islam and Israel are living still. They have both survived the death of their temporal power. The empire of the Saracen has passed away, the dominion of the Jew has ceased; but the *influence* of the Saracen is a present and potent force, and the influence of the Jew is greater than ever before. In a new world these old forms remain—survivals of a culture which has lost its environment but which yet refuses to die. The child of the bondwoman and the child who received the inheritance of Abraham are still found walking hand-in-hand, contemplating that former glory which has been laid in the dust of death.

**I** BLESS Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast a place for the outcast—for the man who

has gone over the line. I thank Thee that he who cometh unto Thee is in no wise cast out, even though he comes by an unwonted way. I praise Thee that Thou hast a revelation for the Hagers of the world—for those whom many have deemed in Egyptian darkness. Enable me to realise that even in their desert there are springs! I often speak of the wells of Baca—the wells for Thy covenanted people; but I forget the wells of Beersheba which are prepared for the men of the wilderness. I forget that for them also Thou hast revealing messages, openings of the inner eye. Help me to remember it, O Lord! Help me to remember that *my* dividing lines are not *Thy* dividing lines! Help me to remember that Thou hast a star which leads to Bethlehem those who have missed the morning sun! Help me to remember that Thou hast songs of Christian glory not included in the choir of the prophets! Help me, above all, to remember that the springs which Thine angel discloses are often just in the places which I have pronounced dry parched land! Increase

my hope for man, my sense of man's possibilities! In the hour when I despair of my brother let me see what Thou seest, let me hear what Thou hearest—the rushing of underground waters, the promise of a life that shall make the desert glad! The desert will to me be already glad when I learn that in Hagar's wilderness there are secret wells seen by Thee.

## CHAPTER II

### LOT THE LINGERER

THE figure of Lot has already met us in travelling through the life of Abraham. But in a book of representative men he cannot be dismissed with an accidental interview. To be seen fairly, a man should be seen by his own light. His portrait should be taken when he is standing alone. A face of average comeliness will look very plain when it is placed beside one of extreme beauty; yet, when seen apart, it may have a charm of its own. Lot makes an excellent foil to Abraham. Abraham's is a face of extreme beauty, and any ordinary countenance will suffer if placed beside it. But it does not follow that Lot himself might not contrast favourably with many on his own plane. In point of fact he did exhibit a certain beauty of aspect when

he was not in the presence of Abraham. When he stands in the midst of Sodom, he looks so remarkably well that his name has been handed down to posterity as one of the world's superior souls; he is called 'just Lot.' Let us consider, then, the man in himself. What is his place among representative men? What class does he stand for amid the various orders of humanity? That is the one question, the crucial question. Everything else about him is accidental; but the point of Lot's contact with a common phase of human nature, the sphere in which he meets with an experience repeated in all time—this is the abiding thing, this is the permanent element in the man.

There are two words in the Bible narrative which seem to me to express in one brief sentence the place of Lot amid the phases of humanity—'Lot lingered.' I would say his distinctive position is that of the man who falls behind in the march of civilisation. He does not go back; he never could be classed among the lapsed masses. His charac-

teristic is, that at a certain point of the road he stands still and allows his comrades to move in advance of him. Lord Macaulay, in one of his Essays, raises the problem, Why has the navy of Spain declined? He solves it by the answer that it has not declined, but that the increase of other navies has left it in the rear. Whether this be the solution as regards Spain, I cannot tell; but it is the answer which may be given to all who put the same question regarding the tardiness of that ship of life which we call Lot. It is behind the others, not because it has lost speed, but because the others have gained speed. Lot is in many respects like the Chinese Empire; he has not fallen back into barbarism, he has simply failed to keep pace with civilisation. He stands where he was. In a metaphorical sense he has become what his wife is said to have become in a physical sense—a pillar of salt. He has been crystallised into an inert mass which marks only one stage of a journey.

This man was, originally, marching abreast



with humanity. He had joined the band of Abraham—that first missionary band among the sons of men. He had attached himself to the cause of those whose object was to carry the blessings of culture into lands of darkness and to bear the lamp of knowledge into scenes of ignorance. It was a stream of high civilisation, which was seeking to irrigate the nations. Nothing could have been more fair than Lot's morning; it promised a fine afternoon. But for him there has come no afternoon; his day is still but beginning. The afternoon has come to others. It has come to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, but not to him; he stands yet where he first stood—on the confines of that missionary march which he had been expected to pursue.

Now, there is nothing unusual in this. It is quite a common thing to see a whole community of men left behind by a stream of civilisation; you cannot pass through any city without seeing it, you cannot pass from the city to the country without observing it. In every age of culture there are to be seen those

who have lingered behind, who remain yet in the primitive condition of ages long ago. But I wish to direct attention to a new light which the case of Lot throws upon these. The common saying is that the men left behind are the physically unfit. Those who pursue the march are thought of as the strong, the active, the able-bodied ; they who have lingered on the road are taken to have been the weak, the frail, the lives destitute of animal vigour. But in this case of Lot, it is entirely the reverse. Lot is left behind, not because he has too little of the physical, but because he has too much. He is left behind because his animal nature is stronger than that of his comrades. Abraham and those who follow him are animated by a sacrificial impulse ; they survive by a crucifying of the flesh. Lot is left behind by reason of a *fleshly* impulse and an inability to resist that impulse. He is not driven to the wall ; he believes he is driving others to the wall. He looks upon himself as the really progressive man of the company, the only man who is truly making

his way in the world. In his own eyes he is the object of natural selection, the chosen favourite of fortune. It is by and in the exercise of a physical passion that this man is interrupted in the race of life.

What was this physical passion? It was avarice. It was the glitter of a great possession that arrested the steps of Lot and chained him to the place for evermore. He saw a fertile field, and he said, 'I will make this mine; I will settle down here.' Every race has, in my opinion, a special sin. Rome has her pride; Greece has her voluptuousness; Babylon has her extravagance. I think the special sin of Israel was avarice. I think avarice is the sin attributed to the man in the Garden of Eden—the primeval Adam covets a tree not his own. The trait becomes hereditary; it is repeated all down the stream. We see Cain envying a brother's prosperity. We see Jacob aspiring to another's birthright. We see Esau selling his soul for a mess of pottage. We see Achan hiding a Babylonian garment. We see Gehazi accepting unlawful

gold. We see Dives—the parabolic representative of the national sin—allowing a starving beggar nothing but the crumbs from his table. When Paul says ‘the love of money is the root of all evil,’ he has his eye upon his own land. The native of another land might have given another root; the Roman might have stigmatised pride, or the Greek sensuality. But to Paul the Jew the root of evil was the sin most contagious to the nation—the love of money, the spirit of avarice.

Now, this was the sin which has caused Lot to linger. He has been made stationary by avarice. It is through a grasping spirit that he has been shunted from the line of progress. That grasping spirit was developed, not by the experience of want, but by the hour of prosperity. As long as the missionary band of Abraham was in struggle, it remained in unity. In the day of storm and stress it revealed no discrepancy. Abraham and Lot walked together with seemingly equal steps as long as it was shadow; it was the dawn

that displayed their inequality. While their life was a common struggle in the wilderness they had but one interest—the desire to maintain life. But when the storm and stress subsided, when the sun of prosperity began to shine, when the vision of golden fields flashed before the eye with the promise of coming harvests, when the desert broke forth into singing and the wilderness blossomed as the rose, then it was that the difference of the men appeared. It was in prosperity that the lives parted asunder. It is prosperity that reveals our power of being generous, or our want of that power. Poverty makes the open heart and the narrow heart indistinguishable; but the rising sun of fortune shows their contrasted colours. Is it not written of the wheat and the tares, ‘Let both grow together until the harvest’—the time of prosperous ingathering. In the time of undergroundness, in the day of struggling growth, wheat and tares are indiscriminated; but when the harvest is come, when the buried life emerges, when the field is waving with yellow corn and plenty crowns

the year, then the wheat and the tares are severed, and Lot and Abraham assume their separate spheres.

Now, I want just to remark parenthetically that many a lingerer on the road of culture owes his backward position to the flush of prosperity rather than the blast of adversity. Those who occupy the rear are indebted for that place more frequently to absorption in physical pleasure than to the experience of physical weakness. Some, doubtless, have been crushed out of the way—not, I think, the majority. The majority have been rather the violent than the men *taken* by violence; they are those who have grasped with too much insistence at a present object and ignored the things of the future. The main cause of arrest in human development has been avarice for the object of the hour. Lot is not an exceptional case; he is a fair specimen of his class. Arrested development has more root in moral obliquity than either in intellectual stupidity or in physical incapacity. The larger number of its victims have become its

victims by yielding to the animal impulse which prompts to seize the present moment in preference to all other moments. They have been dominated by a malady which is distinctly moral; they have succumbed to avarice; and avarice is a form of sin.

It is my opinion, indeed, that, if keenly analysed, every sin will be found to be some form of avarice. All self-indulgence, all debauchery, all licentiousness, all jealousy—even love's jealousy, are but the forms of the one passion—the desire for personal monopoly. If this passion were exercised to the full, I conceive it would constitute what is called 'the sin against the Holy Ghost.' If the fruit of the Spirit be the love of humanity, the absence of the Spirit must be the exclusive love of self. Perhaps no human soul has ever reached that absolute stage of privation. I think we are saved from committing the sin against the Holy Ghost by the fact that no man's avarice is complete, that even the most loveless soul has a little corner in its heart kept vacant and kept green for somebody.

But, while all sin is a form of avarice, the name of that vice is usually limited to a particular phase of the desire for monopoly—the coveting of material possessions. This is the form which it has always assumed in the Jewish economy. We have taken Lot as its representative and Lot's lingering as its typical result. And now there arises a question. Why is it that this man, type as he is of his nation's besetting sin, and condemned through that sin to an arrest of development, has yet come down to posterity with the epithet of 'just'? He is lauded in spite of his lingering, he is commended notwithstanding his covetousness. Why? Should we not have expected unqualified opprobrium! Whence this tone of respect? Whence this ascription of justice to a man of avarice?

I answer, because there is an avarice which is compatible with justice and because Lot belongs to that particular school of avarice. In the sphere of worldly possession I recognise three classes of men—the generous, the avariciously fraudulent, and the avariciously



just. The generous man is eager to spend; the avariciously fraudulent man will sink all principle for the sake of gain; the avariciously just man is bent on being rich within the range of principle. To this last order belongs Lot. You would never class him in the list of thieves and robbers. He would die sooner than steal. His is a thoroughly legal mind. His motto is, 'Render unto every man his due.' Nothing will induce him to fall below the claims of justice. But he would be equally pained to go beyond them. He will give to no one less than his due, but to no one will he give more. He might be described characteristically as the man who never gives discount. Justice is his watchword, but it is justice pure and simple, never sinking into fraud but never rising into generosity. Twenty shillings in the pound is his ideal—not nineteen, not twenty-one. He will do what is right, but not what is kind, not what is overflowing. His verdict is, 'To the law and to the testimony'; if he has agreed with you for a penny a day, you will not prevail on him to add a single farthing.

The Epistle to the Hebrews says that in the upper sanctuary there is a place set apart for 'the spirits of just men made perfect'—which I understand to mean 'the spirits of just men made generous.' That is the place in the future heaven which I would appoint for Lot. He was on earth a just man; he never transgressed the principles of justice by *deficiency*. But he ought to have transgressed them by *excess*. It was well to give no less than his neighbour's due; but he should have been able to give more. The perfection of the heavenly state requires that justice should be supplemented by generosity. The state of the avariciously just in the present world is high in comparison with the state of the avariciously fraudulent. Yet I should say that the latter will be more easy to convert than the former. A fraudulent man knows that he is wrong; but it is very difficult to convince a man of bare justice that he is anything less than a saint. Like the Pharisee in the temple, he will give a catalogue of all the debts which he has duly paid, and will thank

God that he is superior to other men. Victor Hugo in *Les Misérables* has introduced a very striking portrait which gives expression in an exaggerated form to the difficulty here indicated. I allude to the portrait of the constable Jabert. This man has always been scrupulous for observing and enforcing the exact letter of the law. The rigid fulfilment of this undeviating routine has become a conscience with him. One day he is betrayed into an act of leniency towards a prisoner. His remorse for that leniency is so great that he commits suicide. The pain of transgressing the law of justice by performing a generous deed has been too much for him; it has been as great as would have been the pain of transgressing the law of justice by performing a deed of meanness. He has felt himself as much degraded by his act of magnanimity as if he had perpetrated an act of baseness. The incident is only an exaggerated illustration of the self-complacency which belongs to the avariciously just.

The crucial instance of Lot's character is

his appropriation of the lion's share in the partition of territory with Abraham. The incident illustrates both his justice and his ungenerosity. He did not take the land by force. He was told by Abraham to make his choice of a locality; he selected the finest spot. Legally, he might easily say, 'I have done no wrong.' Measured by law, he certainly had not; measured by grace, he had. I would describe his choice of the lion's share as, not illegal but ungracious. It was within the rights of law, but it was outside the limits of generosity. Why had Abraham given him a choice at all? Because Lot's servants had been a torment to Abraham, had created strife and wrangling within the band. Lot should have remembered this, and should have moderated his desires. He should have remembered also that Abraham's was the mission field and that the mission field ever deserves the best. Lot was choosing land for his own benefit; Abraham was choosing land for the benefit of the kingdom of God. All this made Lot's choice ungraceful, ungracious.

The selfishness of the choice has brought its own penalty—stagnation. The failure of Lot did not come from the territory in which he settled down; it came from the fact that he did settle down. If Lot had made his possession a mission field, it would have thriven; but, instead of adapting it to culture, he adapted himself to its want of culture. Any piece of ground, under these circumstances, would have become barren ground—Abraham's would as much as Lot's. It is the man that makes the place. Personality is a stronger force than environment; Abraham would have immortalised the Plain of Sodom, Lot would have left Mount Moriah in its native obscurity. Lot chose the rich plain for the reason that the ox chooses the rich pasture, and he has had the ox's reward; he is browsing there still.

And yet, I should be sorry to deny this man his due amount of credit, nay, his due amount of sympathy. Let us remember that for such a man it was a very arduous thing to be just, and that therefore it was a very

great victory to achieve that goal. For a generous nature it is easy to avoid falling short of justice; the temptation is, to exceed justice. But for one by nature avaricious, it is a brave thing to be just. Honesty, with such a man, would need to be *more* than a policy; it would require to be a passion. The man who is too covetous to be generous and who is yet too just to be fraudulent must possess the principle of honesty in an extraordinary degree of development. From this point of view I would give my sanction to the epithet by which Lot has descended to posterity. Let him take it—he is entitled to it. A more sounding epithet would have been untrue. We could not describe him as ‘loving Lot,’ ‘tender Lot,’ ‘magnanimous Lot’; but ‘just Lot’ is a phrase which truly expresses his character. He has earned the right to it by reason of the very temptation which assailed him.

The truth is, this man occupies morally that very position which he holds socially; he is the man who lingers. Socially, he is

neither among the barbarians nor abreast of the highest culture; he is stationary at a particular point. Morally, he is neither a very bad man nor a very good man; he is a correct man. He stands in the golden mean between baseness and generosity—the plain of justice. Behind him is the valley of humiliation, in front of him is the mount of self-forgetfulness; he belongs to neither. He stoops not to the low, he soars not to the high; he keeps the level plain. He is the middle man, the just man. He has paid his way, though he has paid no other's way. His life has been self-contained, but it has been also self-restraining.

If I were asked to place an inscription on the grave of Lot which would be congruous with the facts of his life, I would write the words, 'A man worthy of better things.' There are some things which are done so well that we are disappointed they are not done better. Many a schoolboy gives us dissatisfaction in the very points where he is strong; we say, 'A lad of such parts should

take a higher place.' Even thus does Lot impress us. He dwells in Sodom, but he is far *above* Sodom. In the midst of an environment of iniquity, he never descends. His *family* descends; his innermost surroundings become unfavourable to purity; but Lot himself stands firm—he bows not to temptation. A man who could thus resist going down might well be expected to go up. A man who could withstand temptation to descend into the pit should have been winged with aspiration to ascend into the heavens. We feel, in looking at him, as we feel in looking at some unfinished building. The foundation is there, the pillars are there, the various stories are there; but the roof is wanting. The man is far above the ground, but he is not pointing to the sky. He has surmounted the dust, but he has not reached the gold. He has fulfilled the law, but he has not arrived at love. He is so high that he ought to have been higher.



O THOU whose nature and whose name is Love, let me not pause short of *Thee*! Let me not linger on the march of my pilgrimage at any spot less beautiful than Love! Let me not be content to say, 'I have kept the law—I have not struck, I have not robbed, I have not slain!' Let me not be satisfied to think, 'I have been, in all my dealings, just; from what a height do I look down on Sodom!' Nay, my Father, but let me rather say, 'From what a height dost *Thou* look down on *me*!' Instead of fixing my eyes on the valley which I have surmounted, let me lift up mine eyes to the hills which I have yet to climb! Teach me that all my safety comes from looking up—not down! Make me humble by the sight of Thy hills, O Lord! What time my heart is lifted up with the pride of its vanished yesterday, bring me to the foot of Thy Mount of Beatitudes! Let me see the distance between my soul and Jesus! Give me a glimpse of the Promised Land to cure me of the pride of present possession! Give me a taste of the grapes

of Eshcol to disenchant me of the fruits of Sodom! Give me a strain of the songs of Zion to make me weary of my cherished music! Waft me a perfume of the Rose of Sharon to wean me from the flowers which my hands have gathered! Send me a breath of Thy mountain air to teach me the narrowness of what I call my freedom! Lend me one throb of Thy pulse of love to tell me the poverty of my reign of law! I shall cease to linger on the Plain of Sodom when my eyes have rested on the Heights of Calvary.

## CHAPTER III

### MELCHISEDEK THE UNCANONICAL

CUVIER says that if you give him a single bone of any animal he will tell you exactly what was the structure of that animal. I think some such aid as this would often be of immense value to the biographer. There are cases in which he is required to construct an entire life out of nothing more than a fragment. One of these instances occurs on the very threshold of the Bible history. There appears in the Great Gallery a deeply-veiled figure—a face and form delineated in colours so pale that the spectators have failed to take the impression. The portrait seems designed to picture one seen through a mist. Everything about it is obscure, dim, unrevealing. Yet this figure is more thronged than many of those with clearer forms. Crowds gather round it;

hundreds speculate about it. It is the centre of wonder, the source of controversy, the ground of enthusiasm. Men of all ages come to it. Abraham stands before it as a reverent spectator. A psalmist of the Exile stands before it in genuine admiration. Above all, one of the latest of the New Testament seers—the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews—has given an exalted interpretation of its character and aim.

This figure, so attractive by its very obscurity, is Melchisedek. I propose to join the crowd of spectators who are standing in front of him. I will disregard speculation; I will keep to the dim record of fact. There is only a fragment to work upon; but that fragment is beyond measure striking. It is more precious than all the gold of Israel, for the simple reason that it is quite distinct from the gold of Israel. It is a metal new to the country—rare in any country. It is a fragment wonderfully unconventional—bespeaking an order of things which is foreign to the scene, foreign to the age in which the frag-

ment dwells. Melchisedek is one of the most original figures in the Bible. He cannot be accounted for by genealogy. The writer to the Hebrews does not scruple to say that he is the most unique figure in the Gallery, with the exception of the Son of Man. That is a startling statement; but I think it is borne out by the facts. In the case of Melchisedek the most striking fact is not the character of the man, but the discovery that the Bible has *delineated* such a man. Nowhere has the Old Testament been more inspired than in giving us this picture. Nowhere has the Jew reached so high in charity, nowhere has he gone down so deep in sympathy, nowhere has he broadened so wide in liberality. The thing to consider before all others is not the man, but his environment. It is the last environment in which we should have expected such a man, the last environment in which we should have expected the Jew to delineate such a man. The force of the figure lies in its background; its mystery is its mean surroundings. Let us look at this.

If there was one race which the Jew detested, it was the race of Ham; if there was one family of that race which he specially detested, it was the Canaanite. The Canaanite was his earliest enemy; upon the Canaanite fell his earliest curse. He was associated, to the Jewish mind, with all that was bad, all that was profane, all that was worthy to be exterminated. The man of Canaan was to ancient Israel what the man of Galilee was to later Israel—the dweller in a region which sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. It was the most unlikely thing in the world that to the eye of the Jew anything good should come out of Canaan. He was commissioned to expel the Canaanite—to expel him relentlessly, root and branch, with fire and sword. His warrant for this expulsion was his sense of the Canaanite's badness. It was his *interest* to think badly of this enemy; the thought lent weight to his arm, and gave justification to his blows. It was in the nature of things that he should say of Canaan what was afterwards said of Galilee,

'Search and see, for out of this race ariseth no prophet!'

And yet, how stands the case? It is from the hated race of Ham, it is from the specially hated race of the Canaanites, that the artist of the Early Gallery has selected one of his brightest models. This Hebrew hand has painted the image of a spotless hero amongst the natives of this land of sin and death. Melchisedek was a Canaanite. His birthplace was uncanonical. He belonged to that race which was deemed the enemy of the people of God, and which the people of God were commanded to cast out. It was here—in this environment of horror and desolation—that according to the ancient narrative there grew the loveliest flower that ever made the desert glad.

In that little village of Salem which in the far-off days was to become the great city of Jerusalem, there lived and reigned a chief of wonderfully despotic power. I say '*wonderfully* despotic,' for no carnal eye would have seen the source of his despotism. He had no

outward weapons, no standing army, no strong fortifications. He had never engaged in war, never raised the standard against a foe—perhaps never had a foe against whom to raise it. His empire had grown noiselessly. So noiselessly had it grown that men called him 'The King of Peace.' I should think that was the reason why his capital came to be called Salem; it took its character from the character of its king. A man ruling without weapons was in that day a miracle—a far more wonderful spectacle than would have been the sight of the most triumphant warrior. Men could understand how physical force could preserve order; but that order should be preserved without struggle, without uproar, without the visible exercise of authority, this was a unique thing.

Let us proceed further. What gave this man such a marvellous power? What enabled this unarmed mortal to stand in the midst of a rude population and sway them without a blow? It was their sense of his personal sanctity. He was called not only



the King of Peace, but the King of Righteousness. And it was their sense of his righteousness that made them peaceable to his sway. The only instance I know the least analogous to the picture is the spectacle afforded by Mediæval Europe of the unarmed Pontiff directing the physical forces of the world. But even this latter Portrait has been painted by *friendly* hands; that of Melchisedek has been drawn by the hand of an enemy. Who is it that describes the personal sanctity of this Canaanite? It is his deadly foe. How great must have been that sanctity which could elicit so high a testimony from so unlikely a quarter! If this man's purity of life could dominate the hostile house of Abraham, it is little wonder that his name has been preserved as a desert flower. He did dominate the hostile house of Abraham. Read the fourteenth chapter of Genesis. You will see there a remarkable meeting. Abraham and Melchisedek stand face to face. Abraham represents the culture that was coming in; Melchisedek represents the culture that was

going out. Yet, for the time being, Abraham is the inferior of Melchisedek. Abraham is the man of war; Melchisedek is the man of peace. Abraham represents earth; Melchisedek is the High Priest of heaven. Abraham dispenses to Melchisedek a temporal donation; Melchisedek bestows on Abraham a Divine blessing. Nay, I am convinced that the blessing which Melchisedek bestowed on Abraham was nothing less than ordination itself. I am convinced that the Patriarchal House of Israel received its first priestly impress from the touch and from the blessing of this venerable and venerated scion of a disappearing culture and of a race that was ready to die.

Where did Melchisedek get that priesthood which he was certainly credited with possessing and which he probably bestowed? That is the next question which solicits our attention. And to this, I think, the narrative itself gives us the answer. I understand that answer to be, 'Melchisedek was the earliest man of his class, and therefore was not ordained with hands.' The first priest of God in the history

of the world *must* have come from a house not made with hands. He must have derived his ordination, not from apostolic touch, but from popular suffrage. Imagine that in a somewhat rude and unconventional community there lived a man of singularly pure and upright life—in manners gentle, in piety fervent, in counsel wise, in prayer powerful, in speech eloquent. Imagine that from far and near the peasants gathered on the hills to hear him and listened breathlessly to his thoughts of God. Imagine that he went in and out among the people inquiring as to their welfare and ministering to their need. Imagine that in their sickness he came to pray for them and that by a singular coincidence those for whom he prayed recovered. Would not these men, however far behind in goodness, receive an extraordinary impression of the power of goodness! Would they not also receive an impression of this man's special power and canonise him in their hearts as a medium for their communion with God! I have taken a case which has come within

my own knowledge. But let us suppose that it occurred, not in modern times, but in an age when ecclesiastical institutions were as yet non-existent, would not such a man be an ecclesiastic without orders, a Churchman without a Church, a priest without the laying on of hands! Such the first priest must have been; and the type of the first priest is Melchisedek.

It is in this light that we must understand the remarkable words of the writer to the Hebrews when he speaks of Melchisedek as 'without father, without mother, without descent.' What he means is that his *priesthood* was without father or mother or descent. What he says is this: 'This High Priest of God was uncanonical. He derived his office from no touch of episcopal hand, from no human genealogy. He was the first of his class; he *made* his class. He has lighted the torch of priesthood for his successors; but *God* lighted it for *him*. The generations that followed him can claim him as their ecclesiastical father; but he himself had no ecclesi-

astical father ; he got his life from God. His priesthood came from within. It was his *sanctity* that made him revered. Abraham received his blessing from him, his ordination from him, not because he was the scion of a long sacred line, but because he was the personification of righteousness, the emblem of peace. The tribute paid to him was the tribute paid to holiness. He derived his sacred character from no carnal authority, but from "the power of an endless life"—a life without beginning of days or close of years—the Life of the Eternal.'

I have sought thus to paraphrase the striking passage in Hebrews. The thought clearly seems to be that the chain of canonicity has its origin in the *uncanonical*—in the spontaneous and unruled dictates of the individual heart. The writer declares that the beginning of every ecclesiastical chain is something not ecclesiastical — something human. He tells us that the Churches of the old world each began in a human soul—in the heart of a single solitary man. Within this holy temple

all other temples had their foundation; within this sacred shrine all other shrines were lighted. In Melchisedek, within the precincts of one heart, was laid the nucleus of all that sanctity which attached to the patriarchal line. The priesthood of a Jacob, the priesthood of an Isaac, the priesthood of an Abraham, were all *derived*; but the priesthood of Melchisedek was all his own—it came from the purity of his inmost soul.

There are, I think, three orders of priesthood in the Bible—the Patriarchal, the Jewish, and the Christian; and at the beginning of each dispensation there stands an individual life whose ordination is not made with hands. The origin of the patriarchal dispensation is the holiness of one man—the man Melchisedek. The origin of the Jewish dispensation is the holiness of one man—the man who got his fire direct from the burning bush—the man Moses. The origin of the Christian dispensation is, from the human side, the holiness of one man—the Man Christ Jesus.

I should not have dared to make this last

comparison if the writer to the Hebrews had not made it before me. But he has. He says that Christ was made a priest 'after the manner of Melchisedek.' I prefer the translation 'after the manner' to 'after the order.' The very peculiarity of Melchisedek is that he belongs to *no* order. He did not derive his priesthood from that hereditary descent which in patriarchal times was its common source; he was, in this respect, 'without father or mother.' He was the earliest of his kind. Aaron got his priesthood from the consecrated hand of Moses; Melchisedek got his from no hand. The difference between Aaron and Melchisedek lay precisely in this, that Aaron belonged to an order, Melchisedek did not. The point of comparison, therefore, between Melchisedek and Christ is just the uncanonical manner of their ordination. Looking at the matter from the human side, and abstracting the attention from theological prepossessions, there is nothing to my mind more remarkable than the uncanonical aspect of the Son of Man. He has founded a Church—the greatest

priesthood this world has ever seen. He has built a visible House of God—a structure which has filled the largest space in modern history and occupied the centre of modern civilisation. Yet He Himself stands *not* in a house made with hands. The ordination He has given is an ordination which personally He does not possess. The ecclesiastical function has been made canonical by Him; but He Himself has no canonical orders. He has given what He did not get, imparted what He did not receive. We have obtained the flower from His hand, but we have never seen Him pluck it from any garden. He has not been presented with the rose; He has created it; He has obtained it ‘after the manner of Melchisedek.’

I am deeply impressed with the prominence which the Evangelists have given to this feature of the Son of Man—His want of canonicity. It is to my mind the thing which of all others they are most eager to suggest. As a rule, they are chiefly anxious to tell their story; but, if there is anything they



desire to tell besides their story, it is of the absence of canonicity in the Priesthood of Jesus. We see the child in the temple performing an act of self-consecration to the service of His Father. We see the youth on the banks of Jordan recognised as independent of the baptism He received. We see the man on the path of beneficence pointing the labouring and the heavy-laden, not to the consolation of the Scriptures, not to the counsel of the Hierarchy, not to the cleansing power of the Jewish sacrifices, but to His own underived strength: 'Come unto *Me!*' We see the life as it nears its close repair to no human helps or fountains of earthly preparation, but illumine itself with a glory all its own: 'as He *prayed*, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His face did shine.' He gave the impression of one having 'life in Himself'—life not derived from other lives. He gave the impression of one who was lighting the world—not of one whom the world was lighting. He gave the impression of one who was creating a fountain—not of a thirsty

traveller who had been refreshed by a stream. He was not made sacred by the touch of sacred things; He touched common things, and they became sacred. He glorified objects which were canonically ignoble; He made suffering holy, He made patience heroic, He made the cross divine. Unconsecrated, He became the source of consecration; He was a priest 'after the manner of Melchisedek.'

I have dwelt upon this Gospel picture because it illustrates the Old Testament picture—is meant to illustrate that picture. In the absence of any direct biography of Melchisedek, the best description we can give of his priesthood is to say, It was like the ministry of Jesus. That is what the writer to the Hebrews says, and it conveys a whole volume. What, now, is the effect of this portrait of Melchisedek as reflected in the life of Christ? What is its historical significance, its abiding lesson? Is it not simply this, that in the last result the most important of all factors is the individual man? Catholic and Protestant alike, if they go back far enough,

will arrive at a time when a man's Church is in his own house and in his own soul. They will come to a time when a man's glory shines not from without but from within. St. John in Patmos beheld a city of the future in which there was no temple. But, if religion is to culminate in the absence of a temple, its culmination will be only like its beginning. The first man in the garden of the Lord is ever a Melchisedek. Like the primeval Adam, he stands alone. He is without father or mother or descent. He has received no ordination from the past; he has to make his own paradise. There are no stones in his wilderness which he can make bread. He is the heir to no sacraments, the inheritor of no promises. The desert cannot make him glad; he has to gladden the desert. He is the first rose of summer, and therefore, as truly as the last rose, he is alone. The last rose has lost her companions; but the first has never had companions, and that is equal loneliness. The solitude of Melchisedek is the solitude of the Son of Man—the solitude of one who is born

before his time and who has seen a vision his generation cannot see. Melchisedek burst into flower when the Canaanite was still in the land.

I THANK Thee, O Father, that Thou hast ever planted Thy first rose ere the Canaanite has been expelled. I thank Thee that Thou hast sown the wheat before Thou hast plucked up the tares. I thank Thee that Thou hast sent Thy primrose into my early year. There are Melchisedeks in the heart while the heart is still only a 'land of the Canaanites.' My aspirations come sooner than my deeds. Long before I am good I have longings after goodness. Thou *acceptest* me for these longings, O my God! Thou waitest not for the full corn; Thou tarriest not for the autumn ripeness. Thou comest to the one opening bud in my heart—the one Melchisedek in my Canaan. Thou comest to my first rose—my primrose. Thou callest my life a garden while it is yet a wilderness;

I am justified by faith—by mere aspiration, ere I have done a single good work. The Canaanites are all within me still; the old habits are there, the old temptations are there. But there is a single Melchisedek among them—the wish of my heart for better things. Thou hast accepted that solitary flower and called it righteousness. Thou hast beheld my one star and called it Bethlehem. Thou hast seen my one thread of gold and called it Christ. Thou hast heard the faint beating of my heart and called it Calvary. Thou hast received Melchisedek in spite of his environment; in the dark and in the cold Thou hast received him, in the midst of the Canaanites Thou hast received him. Bless the Lord, O my soul!

## CHAPTER IV

### BALAAM THE INCONSISTENT

THERE are few figures in the Gallery which make one feel so near to modern times as the portrait of Balaam. It is placed in a foreign environment, in a culture long outgrown, in a scene remote from Western experience. It professes to delineate the days of Israel's desert—that period which, of all others, carries us furthest away from present civilisation. Yet, in defiance of these surroundings, the picture speaks to us as a modern man. The desert becomes a city; the plains of Mesopotamia assume the aspect of the streets of London; the distance of the years is annulled, and we stand in the presence of our contemporaries. In a thousand of these contemporaries we meet the form of Balaam. There he stands—undimmed by the mists of

antiquity, uncrushed by the crumbling of empires and the dethroning of dynasties! Three thousand years at least have swept over him in vain. Myriad changes of vesture have signalised the human drama since he stood on the arena of the wilderness; but this man has assumed each new costume, has donned each fresh fashion, has worn each mantle of every age, and remains still his inner self, his original self—one of those forms which make us realise that there is an element in humanity which is the same in all centuries and identical in all climes.

I have taken Balaam as the type of the inconsistent man. He belongs to that widest of all classes—the men of two worlds. The two worlds, however, are Heaven and Earth—not Heaven and Hell. He wavers between two principles; but the principles between which he wavers are not good and evil. It would be more correct to say that he is a man struggling betwixt the old and the new. We have, in my opinion, a wrong view of the character of Balaam. We think of him as a

backslider from the faith of Moses, as a man tempted by worldly ambition to desert the God of Israel. A more unjust view cannot be conceived. A man standing on a doorstep may be either coming into the house or going out. Whether he is coming in or going out must be determined by his previous footsteps. Balaam is unquestionably on the doorstep; but he is the man coming *in*—*entering* the precincts of the God of Israel. His temptation is not the temptation to retreat; it is the temptation to advance—to become a better man. The interruption he experiences, the struggle he experiences, is caused by the breaking of light upon darkness—not by the impinging of darkness upon light. Unless we appreciate this we cannot, I think, do justice to the character of Balaam. Inconsistent he certainly is; but it is the inconsistency, not of one who descends to the moral plain after summering on the top of the mountain, but of one who after long dwelling on the plain begins in later years to *climb* the mountain. That he ever reached the summit I do not



know ; I think the narrative leaves him climbing. But he is climbing—not grovelling ; and it is in this light we must view him if we would see the full proportions of the man.

I think I shall be most true to the delineation of Balaam in the Great Gallery if I place the man in an environment which will be at once equivalent and modern—in other words, if I give the story a parabolic dress. I will try to put ideas in the place of names. If we practised such a system more, I think we should find that history repeats itself, and that the life which we relegate to ancient times is very much the life in which at *present* we live and move. It is the scenery that makes the difference ; the actors are always the same. I will clothe in a modern garb the story of this ancient man.

Once in the olden time, there dwelt in Pethor, a town of Mesopotamia on the banks of the Euphrates, a very distinguished religious preacher named Balaam. He was possessed of extraordinary gifts—splendid imagination, graphic descriptive power, and a wonderful

faculty of dramatic representation. These qualities had been fostered by the religion of the country to which he ministered—the land of Moab. The religion of Moab was the worship of a God of Nature. By whatever name or names He was called, this was His characteristic in the eyes of that people. The Moabite worshipped the physically beautiful. He adored the objects of the eye. He luxuriated in all beauty that was sensuous. He invested female loveliness with a sacramental value—not without exposing religion to licentious temptations. He delighted, above all things, in the vision of mountains. It seemed to him that God's metropolis was there. Wherever he saw physical height, he uncovered his head in adoration. His worship was essentially an aesthetic culture, an admiration of nature's symmetry. In this atmosphere, as I take it, Balaam had been nursed, from this atmosphere he had received his first breath of inspiration—his poetry. It was at the shrine of Moab his imagination had been lighted. Here had been kindled his sense of the physically

sublime. Here had been stimulated his architectural power of constructing lofty imagery. Here had been evoked his facility for graphic description and his faculty for artistic delineation. In all these respects Balaam was the child of Moab.

But latterly there had come into his life a second influence. I say 'a second' rather than 'another.' It did not expel the first, but was added to it as a fresh impulse. There had come to the ears of Balaam tidings of a strange people who had emerged from Egypt into the wilderness and were growing in power and greatness day by day. He had heard of their conception of God, and it was to him a novel conception. It was that of a God whose main feature was, not beauty, not symmetry, not outward splendour, but righteousness. It was the idea of a Being who desired that they who worshipped Him should worship love, truth, holiness—that His votaries should be composed of the men who served their brother man, who sustained the sanctity of home, who were upright in business, stainless in morals

reliable in testimony. The very novelty took hold of Balaam—the admiration of the internal was such a new thing! He was influenced by the Hebrew movement, but he hid the fact in his heart. He knew that in high places this revival of the religious life was not popular. Its origin was democratic. It was the product of revolution, of rebellion against the authority of Egypt. Kings looked with jealousy upon it; those who favoured it were likely to get no promotion. Balaam had been born and bred a conservative. His interests lay not with the masses but with the classes. His influence as a preacher would be shaken if he allied himself with what was deemed not respectable. Prudence counselled him to keep quiet; yet, in the secret hours he often asked himself if this new movement did not supply the missing link in the religious life.

By and by there came to him one of those moments of crisis which reveal a man to himself, which force him to examine himself. The office of court-preacher in the royal house of Moab became vacant. King

Balak looked round to see if there was anywhere a man of pulpit gifts capable of supporting the dignity of the state religion. His eye lighted on Balaam. He sent a deputation to confer with him. They came to the preacher of Pethor, and offered him the tempting charge. They said: 'The king wants a man of culture, of imagination, of brilliant secular gifts. He wants a man whose preaching will attract so as to be a counterpoise. He wants him to strike a key-note which shall be a trump of war against that gloomy view of God which is being propagated by these desert revivalists. Will you come, and blow that trumpet?'

Then Balaam began to question himself more seriously. Was he in a position to accept such an office? Had he a right to denounce the revivalists of the desert! Was not their God in a sense already *his* God! Had He not gained possession of a greater part of his mind than he cared to acknowledge! Was there not something within him which told him that he owed allegiance to more than

beauty, more than symmetry, more than the laws of art—that there was a law more potent than any natural force, more binding than any aesthetic sympathy! And so Balaam declined the call. It was accompanied by conditions which jarred upon him, which rose against one side of his nature. With a noble self-denial he put the temptation aside; he said: ‘I will not go.’

Then the offer was repeated—in a grander form, with more imposing advantages. A larger deputation came, composed of men of higher position; and with increased pertinacity and enlarged promises the call was pressed on Balaam. The salary was doubled; the privileges were multiplied; the attendant honours were augmented tenfold. Balaam was shaken; he was dazzled by the prospect. It is here more than anywhere else that the inconsistency of his character appears. If a man refuses on the ground of conscience a post worth a thousand a year, he is not justified in reconsidering the matter if the same post is offered at ten thousand. With Balaam it ought not

to have been a money question at all; his conscience should have been equally imperative over a mite and over a million. But then, the man had two natures; conscience had not conquered *all* the land. On one side of his being he was still a child of Moab—a lover of the physical. The result was that Moab and Israel began to strive within him—the flesh against the spirit, the spirit against the flesh. The outer man cried: ‘Take the gold; make yourself comfortable, fashionable, famous!’ the inner said: ‘Do not; palter not with your conscience; let no honours tempt you from the path of honesty!’

Balaam, then, like Paul in different circumstances, was in a strait betwixt two. He had a desire to depart and be with the king of Moab; but duty bade him remain. He could not decide at the moment; he required time to think over it. He asked the deputation to stay at his house overnight. They consented. What follows has perplexed all the critics—the Lower as much as the Higher. Hundreds of devout Christians have sought a solution

which would free them from a literal interpretation. As this is a matter not for learning but for imagination, I venture to lift my voice with those of the 'chiefest apostles,' and to offer with all diffidence a humble contribution to the efforts that have been made to clear the mystery.

Balaam went to bed with a tumult in his brain. To go or not to go—that was the question. He laid down his head upon the pillow listening to a dialogue within his own soul—an argument fiercely contested and vehemently maintained. At last nature became exhausted, and he fell asleep; but his waking problem became the problem of his dreams. In Numbers xxii. 20, we read 'God came to Balaam at night.' I understand the words 'at night' to mean 'in a dream'; and I think that all the sequel of the chapter, up to verse 35, is a description of this dream. He thought that the God of Israel stood before him and said, 'If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them.' Then he thought that the morning had come and that, in company with the august



deputation, he was already on his way. And as he travelled in his dream with a heart still full of misgiving, it seemed to him that he was everywhere beset with barriers. Suddenly, the ass on which he rode shied and halted. Balaam lashed her, spurred her, goaded her; but it was all in vain. Neither the menace of the voice nor the stimulus of the whip were of any avail. Ultimately she fell on the ground and began to utter words of expostulation. There are no wonders in dreamland. Balaam is not surprised at the conversational powers of the naturally dumb animal. He seems more impressed with her *argument* than with her articulation. He grows calmer and begins to look round; and then, all at once, the obstacle is revealed to him. There, right in the centre of his path, stands a figure with a drawn sword whom he identifies as God's angel and before whom he prostrates himself. The angel warns him that his course is a dangerous one. Balaam offers to return. The angel suggests a compromise. Balaam is to go, but he is to go without any promise on *his* part. He is to accept the vacant

living on the condition that he will only censure the people of Israel when his conscience points to any particular act in which they deserve censure—so I understand the nature of the compact.

With the angel's disappearance Balaam awoke and found that the real morning was come. The various voices of the night had been the various voices of his own mind. But of these, the voice of the angel remained paramount. It seemed to offer a prospect of making the best of both worlds. Was it not likely that, after all, occasions would arise in which Balaam might at once be true to his conscience and acceptable to Moab! Was it not almost certain that the children of Israel would sometimes make a slip that called for denunciation! Was it not *absolutely* certain that at least isolated individuals of the band would be guilty of trespasses and misdemeanours which would enable him to point a moral that would be dear to the heart of Balak! Had he not found at last a way by which he could both keep his conscience clear

and raise his fortunes high! He resolved that he would go.

Now, it will be acknowledged that this compromise put Balaam morally in a very dangerous position. It was practically the position of a preacher whose parochial success was proportionate to the amount of sin in the district. The ordinary case of the religious minister is just the reverse; *he* is deemed successful in proportion as he can give a good report. But when a minister is told that his income will rise with the increase of sin in his parish, he is brought perilously near to a great temptation—the temptation of desiring that sin may abound. Balaam was placed in circumstances where his material interests came into conflict with his spiritual interests. His material interest was Israel's sin; his spiritual interest was Israel's holiness. He was the auditor of two simultaneous and opposing voices; the one called on him to contemplate the sea's buried dead, the other bade him count its treasured pearls. Which of these voices was to win?

I think I must answer that the victory remained with the last. I know this is not the common view. We have come to think of Balaam as a man who came to curse the people of God, but who, by an involuntary process, was made to utter words of blessing. I submit that such is not the view suggested by the narrative. Let any one read the twenty-third and twenty-fourth chapters of Numbers and say if he thinks these magnificent words were intended to describe the absence of premeditation. But, indeed, there is no room for argument on this point. The narrative tells us in express terms that there was premeditation—that the addresses of the preacher were not even extempore, much less involuntary. It tells us that before delivering his sermons he had moments of communion with God. What he said in public was the result of what he thought in private. Many a cleric has entered his study with a determination to please Moab, and has emerged from it with a resolve to bless Israel. I have known more than one man who has sat down to write a

life of Christ from an exclusively human standpoint. In each case, he has said to himself, 'I must be abreast of the time ; I must explain everything by the causes known to Moab ; I must avoid all reference to the supernatural—otherwise I shall be deemed behind the age.' But as he proceeds in his task, he has found that the Christ he proposes to construct would be more supernatural than the one he seeks to avoid. He has found that to attribute the Christ of the Gospels to natural causes would be to proclaim a *real* violation of law, a miracle compared to which the healing of the demoniacs would be pure *science* ; and he has been compelled, in the very defence of his scientific reputation, to assume the presence of an influence not measurable by Moabitic lines.

Now, this is a parabolic description of the case of Balaam. We may call him an inconsistent man ; but his inconsistency appears, not in the pulpit, but in the study. He enters the study with a naturalistic bias. He is dazzled by the court of Balak, impressed with the honour of being selected as the representative

of the age. He would like, if possible, to keep up that reputation—to interpret all texts on the lines of the school of Moab. But, as he reads, he is in communion with a larger influence; and ever more and more that influence becomes the dominant one. He looks at the field of thought from various standpoints, surveys it from different altitudes. But, from whatever height he beholds it, he is borne back to the same conclusion—that the fruits of this field have been matured by no earthly sun. Ever as he gazes, the star of Jacob grows clearer and clearer. Ever as he ponders, the destiny of this tribe of the desert shines forth with greater splendour. Ever as he meditates, the origin of this people seems more unique, more inexplicable, more separate from the *world's* origins. When Balaam comes out of his study, so far as intellectual conviction is concerned, he has made up his mind—has decided for the kingdom of God.

Yet Balaam did not outwardly join the kingdom of God. He refused to denounce it; but he would not become a member. Balak

heaped him with obloquy and dismissed him; yet he left not the Church of his fathers. There must have been something pertinaciously loyal about the man—to stick to the old ship when he knew it was doomed and when its crew had treated him with scorn! Balaam parted from the king, but he never abandoned his allegiance. Before parting he gave his sovereign a word of counsel which has handed down his name to infamy, but which, I think, has been misinterpreted in its motive. What I understand him to have said is this: ‘These men of Israel can never be hurt by the word of *others*; if they are ever to be injured it must be by their own hand. I propose, O king, a better test of their power than *you* have offered. You want to see if they can stand your blows; I would ask you to see if they can stand your blandishments. You seek to kill them by floods; can you kill them by flowers! Try them with your temptations; ply them with the allurements, with the seductions, of your city life! If they can resist these they have proved their right to a

unique place in history ; if they succumb they will suffer greater loss than the denunciations of any prophet could ever bring.'

This advice, as I have said, has tarnished the name of Balaam with historical infamy. Yet, I think, unjustly. I believe he spoke in good faith, and with no malign intent, towards Israel. The test he proposed was a sound one. It is the counterpart of that which in the great drama the Almighty accepts for Job. In Job's case the problem was, can man resist the temptations of *suffering*?—in Israel's case the problem was, can man resist the temptations of *pleasure*? I cannot see that the latter is a whit less legitimate than the former. I think Balaam both believed and hoped that Israel would stand the test, would emerge from the trial victorious. What motive had he for wishing the contrary! He had no longer any official connection with Balak; he had been dismissed from his service. Did not all his interest lie in the hope that his refusal to curse the children of Israel would be vindicated by the



stream of events, and that the far-off glory which he predicted for their race would be already prefigured in the eyes of the king of Moab!

The rest of the narrative I can only piece together by the threads of imagination. But it seems to me that the order of events was this: Balaam went back to his home. Moab continued her aggressive policy towards the people of God, and formed a league with Midian to bar their way. Israel had no recourse but war. She was bound for the land of Canaan, and her way to Canaan was blocked. If the barrier could not be removed by favour, it must be shattered by force. Israel advanced to battle. She was small among the nations; but her strength lay in her religious faith. Midian too desired such a strength. On her was to fall the brunt of the battle, and she wanted spiritual support. She thought of Balaam. If that great preacher would stand in her ranks to stimulate the living, to comfort the dying, she believed she would prevail. Balaam is summoned from his retreat. He obeys. He joins the ranks that

are fighting in the cause of his former master, Balak. Not as a soldier does he join, but as a priest, as a consoler. In doing so he displayed no inconsistency with his latest conviction; who needs religious consolation so much as those in the *wrong*! Balaam fell on the field of battle—in the capacity, as I think, not of a warrior but of a priest. He died helping the enemies of Israel—but the help he gave was such as a man may give to those with whom he agrees not. In his last act he has been numbered among the transgressors by the reckoning of history; he is not included in the visible communion of the people of God. Yet he remains on the roll of inspired men, yea, of God's inspired men. His words are authoritative. His sayings are proverbial; they have become part of Holy Writ; they are quoted; they are sung. Israel is as proud of them as of the utterances of Isaiah. There is no stronger testimony to the truth that the ways of heaven are wider than the paths of earth and that the inspiration of God is larger than the creeds of Man.

O THOU who hast never left Thyself without a witness in any land, let me not narrow the range of Thy Spirit! Let me not say that Thy voice can only reach the members of the Church Visible! Teach me that Thou hast psalmists even in Moab, seers even in Midian! Often have I marvelled at the Balaams of this world. I have seen gifted souls, inspired souls, who have *not* been numbered with Thy congregation; I have heard strains of Divine melody which have not come from Thy sanctuary; I have read thoughts of sublime beauty which have not issued from Thy tabernacle; I have found deeds of sacrificial love which have not radiated from Thy visible altar—and I have wondered. Let me wonder no more! Thou art larger than Thy tabernacle, Thou art wider than Thine altar. Thou travellest on the wings of the morning. In the uttermost parts of the sea I find Thee. If I say of any spot 'Surely here the darkness will cover me!' behind the curtain I meet *Thee*! We do not shut Thee out by shutting the gates on Thee;

Thou canst enter through closed doors. Thy rays are Röntgen rays; they pass through my fleshly barriers, they detect my secret wounds. Do not let me call my brother an infidel because he joins not Thine outward Church; Thy Church can join *him*! Thou hast recognised hundreds on the road to Emmaus who have not recognised *Thee*. Thou hast seen Nathanaels under the fig-tree who never knew *Thou* wert passing by. Increase my charity, O God!

## CHAPTER V

### AARON THE VACILLATING

THERE is one type of man who, I think, has not always received the sympathy he deserves—the man who has narrowly missed the goal. Of course, those who have narrowly missed and those who have missed by a million of miles are historically in the same position; they are all included under the general name—failures. Yet, while historically it may be true that ‘a miss is as good as a mile,’ it is, morally, *not* true. The man who has lost the goal by a final slip of the foot is in a vastly different position from the man who has never come within sight of it. I should be disposed to divide humanity into three classes—the man of success, the man of failure, and the man of shortcoming. I would place the last between the other two. He comprehends by

far the largest class among the runners of the race of life. Perfect success is not reached by many; absolute failure is the lot of few; but the narrow missing of the mark is the fate of the large majority of men. Take a survey of those around you. What is their mental average? It is not greatness, it is not smallness, it is not even middle-sizedness; it is shortcoming. It is the missing of the mark by a hairsbreadth. It is the absence of one little fragment of the alabaster box preventing the structure from being pieced together. Our common impression of the men and women around us is not that the chain is brass, but that there is a link wanting to the gold.

Now, I am very glad that this wide class has not been left without a representative in the Great Gallery. The man chosen as its representative is Aaron. If I were asked to define his place in the Gallery, I should say he is the man who narrowly missed the mark, who came in second. I do not know any portrait of the group that is so suggestive of

this quality. It is not, for example, suggested by the portraits of Cain and Esau. These are the delineations of men who were not in the race, whose significance lay in the fact that they were impediments to the running. But Aaron was a real competitor. He was a man who bade fair to be the leader of his time. He did not stand to his brother Moses in the same relation that Cain held to Abel, or Esau to Jacob. He had a common cause with Moses. He burned as eagerly for the emancipation of his people; originally, he seems to have burned more eagerly. If any spectator had looked upon the two brothers before the day of the emancipation and considered their comparative promise of success, he would, I think, have given the preference to Aaron. Aaron was the elder. That itself was little; it had become a proverbial saying that in the Hebrew race the elder should serve the younger. But in this case there seemed to lie with Aaron the maturity of *mind* as well as years. As the brothers stand before us, we are struck with the contrast between them;

and it is Aaron who seems to have the higher ground. Moses is shy; Aaron is bold. Moses is reticent; Aaron is outspoken. Moses halts in utterance; Aaron is a man of eloquence. Moses is meek and prone to wait the tide of events; Aaron is an impetuous spirit and tends to rush into action. Moses meditates forty years in the desert of Midian; Aaron in that same desert seems to have been doing powerful service in winning the favour of the neighbouring chiefs.

And yet the fact remains that Moses was the chosen man, the man selected to be the leader of the rising age. Why is this? The common answer is, because he was by nature the weaker vessel, and because God selects the weaker vessel. But where do you *find* that doctrine—that the principle of Divine selection is the natural weakness of the object? You refer me to St. Paul—‘God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.’ Yes, ‘the weak things of the *world*’—the things which the *world* deems weak. That is a very different statement



from 'the things which God deems weak.' The truth is, the principle of Divine selection is, and has always been, identical with the principle of natural selection—the survival of the fittest. The men who are chosen by the Great Gallery to carry on the kingdom of God are chosen on distinctly Darwinian grounds—not because they are weak but because they are strong. If Abel is preferred to Cain, it is because he is a fitter man than Cain; if Jacob is preferred to Esau, it is because he is a stronger personality than Esau. Weakness can never be the ground of a selection, either Divine or human. There *is* a paradox in the choice of the Bible; but it does not lie where it is supposed to lie. It lies in the fact that the Bible has a different estimate of strength from that made by the secular eye. The secular eye sees the things on the surface; it measures the power of work by the power of manifestation. But the Bible looks below. It considers, not the power of manifestation, but the power of restraint. It judges a man more by his stillness than by his outcry, more by his

words unsaid than by his words spoken. To the eye of the Bible it is a ruler's *self-repression* that makes him great, that proves him strong. The thing it desiderates is not fighting power but waiting power. It deems most valuable what the world calls weak. The qualities it appreciates are just the unbrilliant qualities—the attributes held to be not heroic. It prefers patience to petulance, temperance to temper, vigilance to violence, latent discretion to loud display. All this is expressed in the aphorism, 'Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.'

We may conclude, then, that Moses was selected for a higher post than Aaron, not because he was a weaker vessel, but because he was a stronger one. Where lay the difference in their strength? It lay within—in the innermost region of all—in the power of will. The Bible's test of strength is tenacity of will. To be immovable like the great mountains, to be steadfast as the solid rocks, is ever its deepest aspiration. The things of nature which it admires are the things which it can think of

as tenacious. The tree whose leaf 'shall not wither,' the city which 'shall never be moved,' the sun that 'shall no more go down,' the well of water 'springing up eternally,' the rainbow which shall be a sign 'while the earth remaineth'—these are among its fondest fancies. And all these are to the Bible but the symbols of a deeper tenacity still—the endurance of a human heart, the steadfastness of a human purpose.

Now, the crucial point of difference between Moses and Aaron was this tenacity of purpose. All other contrasts, from the Gallery's point of view, are irrelevant. Aaron had every quality fitted for a great leader but one—tenacity of purpose. He was eloquent, shrewd, persuasive, pleasing in manner and address, endowed with the gifts that win popularity; but he was vacillating. He was one of the kind whom we meet every day—vehement but variable. Men were drawn to him magnetically, but they had no security that the alliance would be lasting. He was perfectly sincere; he spoke the genuine sentiment which he entertained at the moment.

But there was no guarantee that he would retain this sentiment at the end of the hour. There is a type of character which is described as slow but sure; Aaron might be portrayed as quick but uncertain. I have always regarded him as the Simon Peter of the Old Testament. No two men separated by long centuries are more alike. Both were lovable; both were outspoken; both were rapid in resolution; both received a call in advance of their brethren; both performed deeds of the most jealous service; and both on certain occasions were singularly untrue to their first impulse.

I will add one parallel more—both were the founders of a ministry. Of Aaron, as of Peter, it was virtually said, 'On this rock I will build my church.' Aaron, like Peter, received the key of a new dispensation; he was placed as head pastor over the congregation of liberated Israel; church and state were, for the first time, separated in *thought*. One naturally asks, Why should Aaron have been fit for the church when he was not fit for the state? If he had not the qualities of a rock

for politics, why should he have been credited with these qualities for the pastorate? It is not suggested by the narrative that Moses promoted him to the priesthood in ignorance of his weak point. On the contrary, the most striking exhibition of that weakness occurred previous to his ordination. The incident may be briefly stated. Moses went up to the solitudes of Mount Sinai to commune with the God of Israel. Aaron was left in charge of the multitude on the plain. But the absence of the one man made the multitude lonely. Loneliness might help the religion of *Moses*; but it did harm to theirs. They craved a symbol, an image, something to represent God. *Moses* had been that symbol, that image, that representative. But *Moses* was gone. He had disappeared in the mountain mists; he might never return. They came to Aaron to ask a sign — a visible monument of the Divine Presence. Aaron demurred. The crowd grew clamorous. They passed from request into murmur, from murmur into mutiny. Aaron yielded. He told them to bring their gold

earrings, and from these combined treasures he constructed the image of a young bull, such as the Egyptians worshipped. He only meant it for an image; he told the crowd in so many words that it was intended to represent the God of Israel. But the crowd hailed it as the God of Egypt—the presence by which the *Pharaohs* had prospered. They forgot their patriotism. They cried, in effect, ‘Let the Egyptian omen be our omen!’ They broke into shouts of joy; but the shout of joy was a shout of rebellion.

Now this scene of tumult and uproar came from the vacillation of Aaron. He had manifested a spirit of accommodation, a tendency to move with the crowd. In contemplating the picture in the Gallery, my wonder has always been why Moses is represented in an attitude so lenient towards Aaron. We do not, indeed, associate Aaron with the rebellion of the crowd, nor deem that he was worthy of their penalty. But Aaron is not only pardoned—he is promoted; he is raised to that position of eminence in the church which is denied him in

the state. With the full knowledge of his vacillating spirit, with the full proof before the world that he had been guilty of compromise, this man is invested with the High Priest's office, with the chief pastorate of the great congregation. I am looking at the matter merely artistically—from the standpoint of a spectator in the Gallery. Keeping purely to the aesthetic, I ask, is it not a breach of art, a violation of the law of harmony, a dislocation in the proportion of things? What *is* the problem? It is this: a man rejected by the state as unfit to be a leader by reason of his vacillating spirit is by that same state selected to be the head of a religious community within its own pale! I have never found the Great Gallery defective in matters of proportion; I have never known the hand of its artists to apply inappropriate colours. But is there not such a misapplication here? Is there not in this picture an inartistic element, a breach of consistency which mars its beauty? We can understand that a stone once rejected should afterwards become the head of the

corner, provided its rejection were found to be a mistake ; but that a stone should be made the head of the corner which was once rejected and which is still known to possess the defect attributed to it—this is surely a fault of the builder!

But I think we have forgotten one thing of great importance—the difference of qualification requisite for a leader in the state and a leader in the church. The quality which would be a blemish in a rock is a beauty in a flower—tenderness. That a rock should be easily bent or broken is a proof of its unfitness ; but that a rose should be easily bent or broken is an element in its charm. The simile has direct application here. The leader of a state ought to be unbending ; firmness is essential to successful government. But the pastor in a congregation ought not to be unbending. His province is that of a servant. It is required before all things that he should be a man of human sympathy—able to adapt himself to the needs of each time. The characteristic of the individual church-leader and the characteristic of the Church



universal must always be one of accommodation to circumstances. That is the secret of *Christianity's* power. It has been durable amid shifting epochs just because it has been willing to assimilate these epochs. The stream has been content to take its colour from the soil through which it flows; therefore it has irrigated many soils. It has turned its ear to the special needs of special ages. It has not granted *all* for which each crowd has clamoured; but it has granted something—it has recognised that every widespread clamour implies a widespread want. It has met the cry for imperialism; it has met the cry for freedom; it has met the cry for asceticism; it has met the cry for earthly loveliness; it has met the cry for reconciliation between religion and science. This priesthood has conquered by stooping, has reigned by serving, has endured by veiling what is not essential to its faith. Its power of survival has been its power of accommodation.

Let me put a supposition. Let us imagine that the man selected to fill the High Priest's

office had been, not Aaron, but Joshua. A greater contrast than that between Aaron and Joshua cannot be conceived. If Aaron was vacillating, Joshua was unbending; if Aaron was soft, Joshua was inflexible. The future leader of the army of Israel was a man of no compromise. To him it was enough that the law had once been given; to be once given was to be enforced permanently. We know that on account of this quality Joshua was made head of the state; why was he not made head of the church? Though a little younger, he was contemporaneous with Aaron; he lived in the same environment; he was familiar with the same conditions of life. Why did the Gallery not select *him* as the pastor to the great congregation? Clearly because church and state require opposite types of mind. Joshua made a great leader to the army; he would have made a very poor leader to the church. The reason is that, while the army wants an *absolute* leader, the church does not. The church leader must be content to be, in a measure, *led*. He must consent, in certain

things, to *follow*. He must watch the course of the stream. He must observe the current of the time. He must consider the state of the tide. Aaron was chosen because he was such a man as that. No other type of mind but the bending mind will suit the church leader. Aaron erred, not by his efforts at conciliation, but by his means of conciliation; instead of making a golden calf, he should have told the clamouring crowd that they would soon have a visible tabernacle. His error was, after all, one of detail. The principle was misapplied, but it was good and true. The man who can feel the pulse of the multitude and suit his gospel to their needs is the man who merits the foremost place in the sphere of the pastoral office.

And this to my mind furnishes the explanation of an incident in the life of Aaron to which I think no other explanation has lent any significance. Twelve rod-branches of the almond-tree are deposited in the tabernacle. Each rod represents a secular power; they stand respectively for the twelve heads of the

twelve clans or tribes of Israel. To these rods another is added—making thirteen. The thirteenth is the rod of Aaron—representing the spiritual as distinct from the secular power. On the day after they have been placed in the tabernacle, Moses enters the building and finds a wonderful phenomenon. The twelve rods remain as they were when first deposited; but the thirteenth—the rod of Aaron—has burst forth into bloom.

Now, what is the ideal significance of this? To me it clearly means that in the tabernacle of God, in the sphere of the religious ministry, the forces which will survive are not the secular forces. None of the twelve rods of temporal power will flourish here. The very thing which makes them survivors in the world would kill them in the church—their inability to bend. They can bud in secular life, because the secular ruler reigns by the exercise of authority. But the spiritual life is not ruled by the exercise of authority. It is ruled by the veiling of authority—by sacrifice, by love. Only one rod will blossom here—the rod of

Aaron! Only one power will bear fruit here—the power of stooping! Within this holy temple the laws of survival are altered, reversed! The things which once disqualified, become the source of life; the rod which would in the outward kingdom have only served for firewood becomes, in the spiritual sphere, a sceptre of potent power!

The strength of Aaron, then, is to lie in something which in the secular province would be called weakness—the capacity to be bent by the troubles of the crowd. We have a fine and a typical instance of this in the sixteenth chapter of Numbers, where Aaron is seen standing ‘between the dead and the living.’ He appears as the intercessor for stricken humanity. A dreadful plague has fallen—fallen as a vengeance. The anger of the God of Israel has been kindled, and thousands lie low beneath the stroke of the pestilence. Then follows a scene of sublime humanitarianism. Aaron takes his place among the stricken, and pours forth his prayer to heaven. He stands on the pestilential field

whose atmosphere is reeking with contagion. In front of him are the remaining members of the congregation who are still untouched—trembling, cowering, anticipating. Behind him are the dying and the dead—a ghastly concourse. Aaron is *in* that charnel-house. He stands on no hill apart from the multitude. He utters his prayers from no palatial retreat securely embowered against the entrance of infection. He comes down into the foul air, into the vile miasma. He identifies himself with the *case* of the dead, of the dying, of those who are preparing to die. His attitude is that of a participator, of one who wishes to be numbered among the transgressors. He could have been no coward—to face the virulence of a deadly and contagious malady! It throws a fresh light upon his attitude towards the worshippers of the golden calf. We commonly attribute that attitude to timorousness; is it not more likely to have been the fruit of pity! Was it not simply another phase of humanitarian sympathy—that same humanitarian sympathy

which here prompts him, in the hour of pestilence to take his stand beside his stricken brethren !

And this has ever since been the characteristic note of the Bible priesthood. In this sphere the rod of empire has habitually burst into softness. The true priesthood has ever been a service of man ; every stage of its development has been a stooping further down. Step by step it has descended into the depths of human care and human sorrow. Step by step it has identified itself with the lot of the suffering and the sinful, till it has reached the last valley of humiliation at the Cross of the Son of Man. Aaron did not, any more than Moses, *enter* the land to which he was going. To both it was only a promised land. Each had a mountain view of coming glory ; each died in the faith of a world to come. But to posterity the world of each *has* come. The land whose dominion was prefigured to the eye of Moses has more than realised his dream ; the priesthood which floated before the sight of Aaron has attained a grander

goal than *his* fancy pictured. The brothers have each had their reward, and each a reward after his kind. Moses bore the secular sceptre and he has inherited the crown of Christendom; the highest thrones of the world are built upon his Law. Aaron bore the rod which blossomed into a passion-flower, and it has issued in the Cross of Calvary; the climax of the heart's devotion is the Sacrifice of Jesus.

**E**NDOW me, O Lord, with the priestly spirit; consecrate me to the service of Thy tabernacle! Help me to take my place with the stricken sons of the wilderness! I do not ask to be enabled to pray for them on the height; let me come *down* from the height! Let me stand in the scene of the pestilence! Let me touch the lepers' spots ere I say 'Be thou clean'! Often have I thought of these words, 'If a man be overtaken in a fault, restore him in the spirit of *meekness*'! I have seen those who would



restore in the spirit of pride ; they speak to the fallen, but they speak from the mountain-top. Not thus would *I* restore, O Lord. I would come with Thy Christ down from my heaven ; I would empty myself with Him. Let me descend with Him into the manger! Let me breathe the atmosphere of the beasts of the stall! Let me wrap myself in the humble garments of a child of earth! Let me join in the common struggle of the sons of Nazareth! Let me accept the same baptism that is offered to the vilest! Teach me that for the healing of a soul there is more virtue in the touch than in the ointment! Let the touch precede the text ; let the pity precede the precept ; let the kindness precede the kingdom ; let the brotherhood with man precede the breath of God! Let me meet the fallen in their own valley, the desolate in their own ruin, the broken in their own desert, the wandered in their own night! Then shall I be in truth one of Thy Royal Priesthood.

## CHAPTER VI

### CALEB THE EXPLORER

THERE is one respect in which the Jew has more resemblance to the Briton than to any other nation in the world—he has been a great colonist. He has been transplanted into lands the most diverse from his own, and he has flourished there. He has been carried into Egypt. He has been settled in Syria. He has been resident in Babylon. He has sojourned in Persia. He has been amalgamated with Greece. He has been a subject of Rome. He has been a dweller in all the lands of the West. In all these directions he has preserved his nationality; yet he has adapted himself to the new soil.

But, if the Jew and the Briton resemble each other in their power of colonisation, they resemble each other also in this, that with both

of them the power of colonisation has been an acquired thing. Neither the Jew nor the Briton has been, by nature, a geographical explorer. Both have had an original impulse to be self-contained, to keep within their own walls. The *motive* has been different; that of Britain has been an insular prejudice, that of Judah has been a religious isolation. But in each case the effect has been the same—a tendency to shrink within the shell. In both instances the migration has been something thrust upon the nation against its will. The act has been salutary, but it has not been spontaneous; it has been the result of external influence.

Turning specifically to the Jew as he is historically exhibited in the Great Gallery, we are impressed with the fact that he is by nature the man of his own fireside and that he is called from that fireside only by outside voices. His is not naturally the instinct of the swallow—the instinct of migration. Doubtless he is ever stretching towards the future; but it is a national future. What he seeks

is a brighter glow of his own fire. His goal is the coming of his Messiah; but his Messiah is not to take him out, but to bring others in. He looks upon the Christ, not as one who will transplant him into other lands, but as one who will transplant other lands into Jewish soil. His motto has been ever 'Home, sweet home.' If he desired travel, it was not that he might explore, but that he might export. He wanted to make every house a model of his own—the same in architecture, the same in furniture. He would have all things to be fashioned after the pattern of his own mount.

It is this absence of a migratory instinct that makes the type of the explorer very rare in the Jewish Gallery. I take the Gallery of Genesis; I find there much locomotion but little voluntary migration. I see the Primeval Man leaving his first home; but he is compelled to it by the sweat of the brow. I see Cain quitting the sanctuary for a foreign land; but he is driven to it by the shadow of a crime. I see the family of Noah become

emigrants ; but they are borne on the waters of a flood. I see Jacob flying from his hearth ; but it is fear that drives him. I see Joseph passing into Egypt ; but it is not as a traveller—it is as a captive. In all the Gallery of Genesis I behold but one voluntary emigrant—the man Abraham. He alone receives an impulse of the *heart* to leave his country and his kindred and his father's house in search of other shores. Yet, even with him, exploration is hardly the motive. He is rather the missionary than the traveller. He goes not forth to seek information but to impart it. It is no curiosity that prompts him ; it is pity. He desires, not a better country, but a better light for other countries. The one voluntary emigrant in the Gallery of Genesis is not a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, but one who has already found a pearl of great price and who longs to reveal it to the sons of other lands.

It is when the Gallery begins to exhibit the scenes of the *desert* that we catch the first trace of the spirit of exploration. In the heart of the wilderness of Paran we see a band

of men animated by an impulse unfamiliar to eastern climes—the impulse of the traveller. While India and China remain at home, while Egypt sits down beside her own Pyramids, while Babylon suns herself in the glories she has gathered, this humble desert tribe proposes to explore. Abraham had gone forth without knowing whither he went; he had been content thus to go. He had been in the position of a man who says, ‘I will not take lodgings in advance; I shall trust, when I arrive, to find vacant rooms.’ But here, in the desert of Paran, there steps forth a man who says, ‘I intend to walk on a different basis; I must know beforehand whither I am travelling.’ That man is Caleb the son of Jephunneh. I take him as the type of the explorer—the first type in the Great Gallery of the traveller as distinct from the missionary. He is a member of the earliest geographical society. It had twelve members in all. Their names have been preserved; but none have become immortal with the exception of two—Joshua and Caleb. I think Caleb was here the

leader. Joshua was rather an actor than an investigator. He was more for the camp than for the council, more for the hour than for the outlook. But Caleb had something of Moses in him. He had an eye for the future. He was capable of Pisgah glimpses. He was one of those lives who seem always to be pitched upon a hill; he could see things afar off. He is the real hero of this enterprise; he has made the work of exploration his own. Joshua is the actual *conqueror* of Canaan; Caleb is the man who predicted the advantage of possessing it.

In the depths of the desert of Paran Moses addressed this geographical society. What he said in effect was this: 'You are now within measurable distance of that land of Canaan which has been the heaven of your dreams and of the dreams dreamt by your fathers. You are within range of that country to which you have looked forward as to a second Paradise, which is to compensate you for the Eden you have lost. The time has come when it will be well for you to consider whether the reality will correspond to the

dream. It may be that your ideal of glory is not the ideal of glory entertained by your fathers. It may be that the lifting of the veil from this land of promise will reveal it to be what you have not pictured, what you have not desired. Consider well ere you take possession of that which you know not! Examine carefully that ground which you are eager to colonise! Go up and inspect it beforehand! Walk round its bulwarks and study its buildings! Mark the life of its inhabitants and the pursuits of its citizens! Enquire whether your desert troubles are likely to die within its walls, whether you will be allowed to drop your burdens when you enter within its gates! Take heed lest your colony be a calamity, your heaven a heaviness, your promised land a permanent loss!

I believe this to be the real significance of the speech of Moses. On any other view we are confronted by a difficult problem. Why should Moses have sent out Caleb and his comrades to explore a land to which the finger of God was pointing! Did not the pointing



of that Divine hand dispense with the need of any exploration! Had not God Himself prepared the land! Why commission Caleb and his companions to inquire whether a colony could be planted there! According to the narrative, there never was a doubt on that matter. The entrance of the people was secured whenever they should go up—secured by the promise of God. Their whole march had been a march of faith. Their ability to enter the promised land had never been based upon human resources; was it to be based upon human resources now! Their hope that the gates of Canaan would open to let them in had always rested on the word of the Lord; was it now, for the first time, to rest on the word of *man*! Was faith to drop her wings at the very gate of paradise! Was trust to become bankrupt within sight of the city of gold! Was the confidence of getting admission into the promised land, which had originally reposed in the *fact* of the promise, to seek its anchorage on a totally different shore—the explorations of a geographical society!

That, I say, is the problem which naturally arises. But, if you take the speech of Moses as I have paraphrased it, things will appear in another light. For, as I take it, the question before the geographical society was not the *possibility* of getting an entrance into Canaan; it was the *desirability* of getting that entrance. The land was ready for the people; were the people ready for the land? Were they morally developed in a sufficient degree to enter upon their birthright? Had they attained mental maturity? Could they appreciate as yet their coming destiny? Granting that Canaan was a city of gold, a city of gold is not the ideal of a child; it would prefer a city of tinsel or a city of fireworks. The exploring expedition was really an exploration of the mind; geographical in form, it was spiritual in import. Its goal was self-examination. The report which Caleb and his compeers were to bring was to decide, not a question of geography, but a question of philosophy. It was to test the present capacity of the people of God, to

determine whether the heart of Israel was ripe for its inheritance.

The truth is, the children of Israel as described in the Great Gallery are related to the physical Canaan very much as Emanuel Swedenborg felt himself related to the Christian heaven. To Swedenborg the question never was whether a man would get into a special physical locality. He had, as I interpret him, no doubt whatever that, so far as mere space was concerned, the good and the bad would occupy the same position—stand by the same crystal river, gaze on the same limpid fountain. It was their *spiritual* localities that were to differ. Standing on the same spot, they were to be oppositely affected; the pure eye was to see beauty, the impure eye was to read deformity. I am no Swedenborgian, but I have always felt that he has here touched a profound Christian thought. In one of the parables of Christ there is introduced a remarkable conception. There is pictured a man who has actually succeeded in getting into heaven. He has entered among

the guests bidden to the King's table. So far as admission is concerned, he has passed the rubicon and secured the prize. But on his admission, his troubles only begin. They originate in the fact that he has not the adequate robe—that his own personality is defective. He is unfit for his environment, unsuited to his surroundings; that which vibrates to others with the joy of wedding-bells, reverberates like a dirge to him. Swedenborg, doubtless, had this passage in his mind when he formed his conception of heaven.

Even such was the conception entertained by Moses of the physical Canaan. He had no doubt whatever that Israel would get in. The question in his mind was, what would she do when she did get in? Would she find her ideal realised? Was she ready for the destined land? Was she sufficiently grown to participate in its pursuits? Ought not she to have a preliminary test applied—a test, not of the land's beauty, but of her own ripeness? Let her destiny be spread

before her. Let her have a glimpse of that country of which she had dreamed. By her acceptance or by her refusal of the proffered cup would it be known assuredly whether she had reached maturity.

Therefore it was that Caleb and his band went up—twelve chosen apostles sent to explore the coming heaven. They were not chosen on spiritual grounds; that would have been to deprive the test of all value. The object was to determine what the *average* mind would think—not what would be the judgment of the élite. In point of fact, there were only two superior minds among them—Caleb and Joshua; out of any twelve taken at random, you will seldom get more than that. Now, I have often put to myself an imaginary problem. Let us suppose that twelve men were Divinely selected to have a preliminary vision of the Christian heaven with the object of reporting its nature to their fellow-men. Let us suppose that, to make them representative of their fellow-men, the selection was made without reference to

spirituality and wholly on the ground of investigative powers. The question I put is this, What would be the probable result of such an exploring expedition? And I think the answer must be that there would not be found more than two out of the twelve who would approve the vision. It is almost certain that at the sight of the Christian heaven ten of the company would start back in dismay—not appalled by the difficulty, but appalled by the facility, of getting in. For they would see there the last thing they expected to see—a life of sacrifice at the centre. Whatever grapes of Eshcol they might behold, whatever gates of pearl they might gaze on, whatever streets of gold they might survey, they would always recognise behind these objects the presence of that form which they had regarded as the symbol of misery—the Cross. The skies of the nightless Paradise would be obscured by the shadow of God; and all the music and dancing would not induce them to go in!

Now, this is the actual position of the twelve

explorers of the physical Canaan. They came to the land of their dreams; they entered within the gates; they stood spectators of the scene. And, in presence of that scene, ten of their number grew faint with dismay. They had pictured something different, something opposite. They had expected luxurious ease, voluptuous rest. Here, in the very interior of Canaan, was a vision of sacrifice—the image of a Cross! The land which they had deemed the home of luxury revealed the prospect of long and arduous labour, of struggle with alien powers, of burdens by night and day! It was altogether the reverse of what they had pictured in their fancy. Instead of minimising their cares, it promised to increase their cares, to add to their weights, to intensify their contact with pain. The effect was immediate and disastrous; the ten refused the prize. Only two of the twelve explorers were willing to make trial of their heaven—Joshua and Caleb. Of these, I think, Caleb was the more eager. Joshua had many great days to come; I think this was Caleb's special day.

Joshua can claim his Gibeon and his Jericho and his passage of Jordan; but this little spot is Caleb's own. It is his one laurel wreath, his bloodless, his unobtrusive triumph. Bloodless though it is, it is a grand victory. We see a man standing up in almost solitary protest against the cry for regress. We see a man trying to convince his disheartened comrades that they are abandoning solid gold, that the country they despise is really a scene of promotion. It is a noble spectacle—none the less noble because to these comrades, to that generation, Caleb's call was vain. Another generation was to justify him, to join him; for the present, the voices of the ten outweighed the voices of the two. When the people received the report of the majority and found that report to be bad, they cried with loud voice that they would not go. It was in vain that Caleb pointed to the grapes he had gathered at Eshcol; it was in vain he tried to tempt his countrymen. Caleb was before his time—forty years before his time. The light he



expected from the morning was to fall on his declining days ; but the morning and the mid-day were to be spent in hope deferred. The man who could keep his hope burning when the torches of the million were extinguished is entitled to be called one of God's heroes.

There are, in the field of speculation, two opposite classes of men whom we equally associate with the idea of sacrifice—those whom an age thrusts prematurely forward and those whom an age steadily keeps back. As the type of the former I would take King Saul ; he was the victim of a premature passion conceived by his race—the desire to have a king. But the type of the latter is Caleb ; and he has a still larger representation. He stands for a very wide constituency which has its members in all lands and in all times. There is no sphere of history in which you will not meet with that phenomenon—the man who is kept back by his generation. The figure of Caleb, first seen in the desert of Paran, meets us again and

again as the ages roll. We see him at ever-recurring periods looking out upon the sea of life, and discerning in the blue expanse islands which other eyes cannot perceive. We hear him calling out to his fellows, 'Come and let us explore this new region of the earth; give me ships, give me money, give me men!' But ever the answer is the same, '*We* see no islands there; we behold no sphere for enterprise—nothing but the waste of waters, nothing but the ocean waves!' Caleb is deemed under a delusion—the island is only in his eye; the land of which he dreams exists but in his heart. Caleb has to bear in silence the burden of his weight of glory.

In all that generation of disappointed Israel the man most to be pitied was the man whose ideal was not broken. I think, in looking at this picture, we bestow our compassion in the wrong quarter. We centre our pity on that generation of Israel which shut against themselves the gates of their earthly paradise. But I think the real object for commiseration

is the man whom they shut out in shutting out themselves. Caleb is the tragedy of the play; the exclusion of the multitude is in one sense its comedy. That thousands of men, on the adverse report of a geographical committee, should voluntarily turn away from the heaven of their dreams, is a conception in which there is something grotesque. But the spectacle of that crowd holding back ■ man who desires to enter in, the spectacle of an individual life debarred from the enjoyment of his paradise by the simple fact that his comrades are not ripe for the same heaven—this is something more allied to tears than to laughter. The one thing which dries the tears is the sublime spirit of sacrifice which lies beneath it. Caleb acquiesces in the postponement of his own heaven. A Christian apostle says that he would be content to be accursed for the sake of his brethren. Caleb is at all events content to *step down* for the sake of his brethren. He takes without a murmur the lower room—the room where his brothers dwell. He consents, during forty

years, to wear a garb inferior to his own—a garb which associates him with the rank of souls far beneath him. He accepts without complaining the command to seek the vale. He conceals his aspiration. He hides his contempt for the sordid throng. He gives no hint that he is above their business. He joins them on their own level, in their own work. He never tells his love ; he buries his sorrow. He takes up his brothers' cares—cares about inferior things. He puts his hand to the duties of the desert when his heart is up in Canaan. Like a greater than himself, he turns his eye from the opened heavens to contemplate the fact that there is no bread in the wilderness.

Regarding that crowd in the desert which had shut against themselves the door of Canaan, there is one point in the picture which has often struck me. They refuse to enter Canaan, but they never dream of remaining in the desert. The alternative in their minds is not between going forward and standing still ; it is between going forward

and travelling back. If they demur to go on, it is not that they may encamp but that they may retreat. As the ideal of the future disappears, there rises the ideal of the past; their cry is, 'Let us get back to Egypt!' They call for a new leader—a leader whose watchword shall be, not 'advance,' but 'retire.' The glories of hope have faded; they resolve to glorify memory. The sun of fancy has ceased to light the hills of Canaan; they will try to kindle it on the plains of Egypt. Egypt, while a present experience, had been the reverse of a glory; but, when the light faded from the future, the past caught a fictitious glow. It is ever thus. When our prospect of the evening becomes overcast, we gild with glory the memory of our morning sky. In no circumstances can man dwell in the present; curtain his Canaan, and he will fly back to Egypt. You and I cannot live in the hour; if we are not to go forward we must go back. Our alternatives are hope or memory, Canaan or Egypt, the land of promise or the land of retrospect. The intermediate spot is ever

desert—a barren waste. Thought cannot dwell there, never seeks to dwell there. It must have either wings for to-morrow or wings for yesterday; it must 'fly away' if it would be at rest.

**B**E mine, then, the wings for to-morrow,  
O my God! If I get first the wings for to-morrow, I shall then be able to go back. Memory cannot bring hope, but hope can adorn memory—even dark memory. Seen from the hills of Canaan, Egypt may seem very beautiful; its toils may be glorified, its pains may be justified. If Thou art preparing me for a heaven of sacrificial love, these toils, these pains, are already justified. If my Canaan were a mere pleasure-ground, every tear shed in Egypt would be a waste of time. But when, like Caleb, I look through the crystal bars of Thy city and see that the cross is the crown thereof, I understand it all. I understand why Thy roses have been red, not white. I understand why drops of blood

have strewn life's garden. I understand why my will has so often been thwarted, why my schemes have so often miscarried, why my road has so often been interrupted. It is because Thy land of Canaan is a land of sacrifice and I am preparing for that sacrifice. It is because the rose of Thy heaven is the passion-flower of Calvary. It is because the centre of Thy throne holds a Lamb that was slain. It is because the messengers of Thy will are ministering spirits. It is because Thy resurrection life keeps the print of the nails. It is because the lowliest are the greatest in the kingdom of Thy glory. The bondage of Egypt will be a golden memory when I accept the vision of Thy land of Canaan.

## CHAPTER VII

### BOAZ THE KIND

THE representative men of an age are not necessarily the great men. Greatness is certainly *one* of the permanent things in humanity; but it is far from being the only permanent thing. Human nature keeps through the ages not only its mountains but also its valleys and its plains. Any gallery of representative men which professes to be adequate must include with the hills the plains and valleys too. Genius is eternal; but so is gentleness. Master minds are ever recurring; but so are minds of ordinary mould. There is a gold which glitters *not*, which shines not in history, but which is none the less a permanent possession of man; it is that species of gold which belongs to life's beaten path and dusty way. I have often been struck with the words



of Paul in depicting the attributes of *love*. He applies to it both a telescope and a microscope. When he looks through the telescope, he cries, 'Love beareth, believeth, hopeth, endureth all things.' But when he takes up the microscope, he sees that love is equally unfading in its minutest forms, and he expresses this in the words, 'Love is kind.'

In looking at this Bible Gallery I have asked myself the question, Is there any figure which represents pure and simple kindness? There are many poetic qualities represented; Enoch has his walk with God, and Moses his glimpse of faith, and David his gift of song. There are many solid qualities represented; Noah has his power of exhortation, and Joshua his power of serving, and Job his power of waiting, and Isaac his power of obeying. But is there no place for a quality which is neither poetic nor solid—the power of simple kindness? Is there no place for that quality which cannot manifest itself by flights nor yet reveal itself by mechanical movement on the ground, but which exists merely as a still small voice in

the heart? I feel that there ought to be such a place, that without it no gallery of portraits can represent humanity. Where shall we look for this lowly form? Where in this Bible Gallery shall we find a picture which is dedicated to the homely attribute of kindness? All the portraits we have yet surveyed are on a large scale. Adam holds the fate of humanity, Noah the fate of a world, Abraham the fate of a kingdom—the spheres are all too important for mere good-heartedness. Can we meet with any spot in the whole portraiture sufficiently limited in its range and sufficiently humble in its scope to furnish the theatre for a life of unobtrusive kindness?

Now, there is one such portrait in the Great Gallery. It is that of Boaz of Bethlehem. He is distinguished from all the others by the unique smallness of the sphere in which he dwells. He fills a very narrow niche; but it is a niche that otherwise would be unfilled. He represents but one quality; but nowhere in the Gallery is that quality represented so perfectly. He is distinctively the man of kindness. This

is his abiding glory ; by nothing else does he live in memory. The men of his day would have valued him for something impersonal. From a worldly point of view he had many advantages. He was of good family. He had great social influence. He was possessed of much wealth. He belonged to a tribe which was already beginning to take the lead in Israel. But by none of these things does this man endure. Their remembrance is only kept alive by the remembrance of another quality, which his contemporaries would have passed by—the possession of a tender heart. More than any one I know within the compass of the Old Testament, Boaz survives by ‘the grand old name of gentleman.’ The nearest approach to him in the New, among those reputed merely human, is Barnabas. Boaz, like Barnabas, was a ‘son of consolation.’ He was so, without *trying* to be so—by the sheer force of that quality which for want of a better name we designate ‘good-nature.’ He did not *aim* at being kind, did not recognise that he was kind. He was so innate a gentleman that he

knew it not. Like Moses, 'he wist not that the skin of his face shone.' His countenance was veiled to his own goodness. He was one of those who, if commended for his charities, would have used the words of surprise put into the mouth of the saints at the Day of Judgment, 'Lord, when saw I Thee hungry or thirsty or sick, and ministered unto Thee!' Kindness was to him as natural as to a bird its song.

The most striking feature in this kindness of Boaz is the apparently trivial nature of the things in which it showed itself. It was not in large donations; it was not in heroic sacrifices. It was in things so small as to seem unworthy of record. Strange as it may sound to say so, I think it is this seeming triviality of sphere that brings Boaz nearest to the Christian standard. According to that standard it is the smallest sphere which most conclusively proves a man, 'He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much.' We often hear the phrase, 'a Christian gentleman.' What is a Christian gentleman?

Wherein does a gentleman of the School of Christ differ from a gentleman of the mere worldly school? I have no hesitation in saying that the difference lies in their comparative power of descending into minute things. It is the difference between law and grace. There is a law of etiquette as well as a law of Moses—a social code which the man of the world must not transgress. But he may refuse to transgress this code, and still be outside the Christian standard. The Christian standard goes down *below* law. It does more than the Book of Etiquette commands, more than is taught in the world's school. The Christian gentleman, as much as the Christian saint, is justified by grace—not law. He would not be satisfied with keeping any set of social commandments. His authority is derived, not from Sinai, but from Calvary—not from any conventional code, but from the dictates of the individual heart.

Now, Boaz is a gentleman of the heart—not of the salon. He does things, not only which the salon would not demand, but which the

salon might forbid. His attitude to his dependants is remarkable. When he goes to his daily work, he salutes his servants with what would now be called a shaking of hands. His first greeting to his reapers is not the voice of the master to the employed; it is the voice of the well-wisher to his friends. He comes into the field and says, 'The Lord be with you!' and from a hundred lips and hearts the response comes forth, 'The Lord bless thee!' That is a relationship which goes beyond etiquette. It is outside the boundaries of all law; it is pure grace, or, what is here the same thing, graciousness. It is a relationship which is founded on the principle, 'Be a man first, and an employer afterwards.' It starts with the recognition, not of subordination, but of equality. It realises the agreement beneath the difference, the unity underlying the separation. In an age when the gulf between master and servant was more marked than it is now, the reciprocal greeting of Boaz and his reapers meets us like an oasis in the social Sahara.

But the crowning glory of Boaz appears in his treatment of one individual life—the fair and gentle Ruth. It is she that has made his name immortal. All his wealth, all his property, would not have saved him from oblivion if he had not stooped in kindness to that young woman. The difficulty is to tell the story with adequate simplicity. As told by the painting in the Old Gallery, it is a tale sublimely artless, charmingly unadorned. It leaves on the mind the impression of one who is depicting something the beauty of which he does not know. There is no striving for effect, no contemplation of effect. The scene is displayed prosaically, mechanically. Yet the result is high poetry—idyllic poetry. It is a picture of ideal virtue in the midst of surrounding debasement, of primitive purity in an age of artificial sins. It is a daisy planted on a granite rock; it is Jacob resting on a pillow of stone; it is a pearl reposing in the depths of a stormy sea.

One afternoon, when the reapers had finished their work, Boaz came into his field to survey

the result of their labour. His eye lighted on a fair girl gleaning the fragments that remained. She was doubtless meanly clad; in any case, the act bespoke her poverty. Yet the fine eye of Boaz detected, beneath the folds of the mantle, the light of better days. 'Who is that?' he asks. They answer, 'It is a young woman from Moab, who married a son of one of your kinsmen—Elimelech of Judah.' 'What has brought her here?' he says. They tell him that she has become a widow, and has left her own land through love of her widowed mother-in-law, Naomi. Here was rather a startling piece of news for a rich and respectable proprietor in the land of Israel! He finds himself to be kinsman to a young woman who is an object of charity in his own field and earns a livelihood through the kindness of his workmen—the native, also, of a foreign country, a heathen country, a country which in the traditions of the past had never been friendly to his people. Moab had been the eyesore of Israel. It had blocked her passage through the desert. It had given



her its solemn malediction. It had leagued against her with Midian. It had proved a grave to her lawgiver, Moses. Was it now to corrupt her labouring men! Were not the women of Moab proverbially lascivious! Was not this new importation into his field a thing not to be tolerated! Did not personal pride and national principle alike counsel him to stand haughtily aloof from this woman, and treat the tie of kindred as an unacknowledged bond!

So Boaz might well have thought, so ninety men out of every hundred would have thought. But Boaz was one of the superior ten. He resolved to speak to this gleaner. He did speak to her; and his first favourable impression was strengthened. His feeling towards her took the form of a protector, a father. He forgot that he was a landed proprietor—a rich man, a man of high connection; he became simply a man. He was filled with compassion for the stranger. He ceased to dread that she would corrupt the reapers; he feared that the reapers would corrupt her.

With almost feminine insight he provided a safeguard. 'Stand fast by my maidens!' he says; in other words, he surrounds her with a cordon of young female companions on whose wholesome influence he can rely. In that moment and by that act he became one of the moderns. He was, unconsciously to himself, the inaugurator of a principle—a principle which, after lying underground for long centuries, was in the fulness of time to burst into flower and fruit.

I said, in the previous chapter, that Caleb might be called the founder of geographical societies. I think Boaz has the distinction of being the founder of another class of societies. The institution which Caleb founded was intended to stimulate young men to explore. But the institution which Boaz inaugurated had a converse object; it was meant to deter young women from exploring too soon. It was designed to keep the female heart as long as possible from a knowledge of the darker shades of life. It is that form of seminary which in modern days is called

sometimes a Girls' Friendly Society, sometimes a Female Guild, sometimes a Young Women's Christian Association. We will not discuss the name; under all names the thing described is the same. The need felt by Boaz is the need felt by the twentieth century. The ancient Jew and the modern Briton have alike perceived that even the purest individual life cannot begin the world in isolation. Before both the same problem looms. Young Ruth is coming into the world's field, and the reapers are not yet the angels. What is to be done with her—so simple, so artless, so confiding? Shall we allow her to take her chance in the big field—with its non-angelic reapers? Shall no attempt be made to receive her into everlasting habitations? Amongst the many mansions of this world—which are not identical with the mansions of the Father's house—shall no one say to this damsel, '*I am the place prepared for you*'?

And the answer given to the question by modern Britain has been the answer given by ancient Israel—'*Stand fast by my maidens!*'

Ruth, before entering the town, has been met at the gates—met by a band of sisters, and cared for. If our age is morally better than the age of our fathers, the change must in no small degree be referred to this cause. It is a question of high importance whether good or evil shall get the start, for it is often the start that in life decides the race. In the case of Ruth the Gleaner, the influence of the Girls' Society was patent and powerful; she was kept pure, she walked sedately. Perhaps it may seem that in her case I have attributed too much to the Society, too little to her own past. I may be reminded that according to the picture in the Gallery hers had always been a soul of burning love. Had she not manifested the most romantic sacrifice! Had she not left country, kindred, home, to obey the dictates of an impulse of the heart! Was this a woman who would be *likely* to go wrong! Was this one who *required* the aid of a Girls' Friendly Society! Would not her path in life have been amply secured without the intervention of Boaz! But I think the

danger of Ruth lay just *in* that romantic element of her nature which had driven her from her native land. Who are those women that are most apt to go morally astray? Is it the cold, the phlegmatic, the passionless? No; it is the women of strong impulse, of fervent feeling, of impassioned enthusiasm. There is a form of evil which tempts, not the bad, but the good, which appeals to that part of our nature seemingly the most unselfish. The light which leads astray appears, as the poet says, to be 'light from heaven.' We feel that a colder heart, a more selfish heart, would have been exempt from this temptation, would not have experienced this special form of Satan in the wilderness. It was Ruth's romantic impulse that made her an object of solicitude. The woman who in the face of home and kindred could say to Naomi, 'Where thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge,' was capable of braving all conventions if an inner fire were kindled. The spectator in the Gallery feels that the Girls' Friendly Society is no *accident* of the picture.

The truth is, I differ somewhat as to the common literary judgment on the Book of Ruth. The prevailing view regards Ruth herself as the Hamlet of the piece. This is not my opinion. To me the centre of the drama is Boaz. If he is a homely figure, it is because he is home-like—modern. Homely as he is, he is the real turning-point of the drama. It is he that averts the danger from the Moabitess. No peril had ever befallen Ruth equal to that which beset her as a gleaner in the field. She was nearer the verge of calamity then than at any past period. Neither her widowhood nor her poverty nor her exile revealed so impending a cloud as hovered over her amid the corn-fields of Bethlehem. What she needed was a protector—a tower of refuge. She found one. Boaz was the man for the hour, the only man that would have suited the hour. He brought to her the one thing she required—protective kindness. On no other bridge could we have trusted her to cross the rubicon. There are services for which great qualities do not avail, which need the touch of a *lowly* hand. No

brilliant figure could have been so artistic for the place and time, no image of beauty could have so graced the picture as does the image of this homely and unadorned man with the heart of human kindness.

And so the master and the gleaner met daily among the golden sheaves; and step by step their mutual interest grew. On her side, gratitude deepened; on his, tenderness increased. You will read wrongly the story of Boaz if you think that his kindness to Ruth came from a preliminary passion; it would be more correct to say that his passion came from a preliminary kindness. His first interest in her was a humanitarian interest; it was such as he would have felt to any one similarly circumstanced. Nor do I think it is correct to say, as is popularly said in such cases, that his protective kindness *gave place* to another feeling. The love which came into his heart was no other feeling; it was but an intensifying of the first impression. Love's forms are protean; in this sphere, as in others, 'whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.'

There are as many different kinds of love as there are different kinds of character. There is a love which is impulsive and vehement—which takes its kingdom by violence and will brook no delay. There is a love which is sober and practical—which expends its treasures not in words but in deeds; it is more concerned about the feeding than about the anointing, more occupied with the essentials than with the spices. There is a love which is intrinsically a state of friendship; it is founded on mutual sympathy and based on a community of ideas. And there is a love which is before all things maternal—which, whether it exists in mother or father or brother, is distinctly protective in character. All of these are produced by the respective natures which reveal them.

Now, the love felt by Boaz was a maternal love. He was a man with a mother's heart, and he took Ruth into that heart. He gave her that form of affection which belonged to his nature—the overflowing kindness of a large soul. The pastoral which began in tears closes in the sound of wedding bells. It is a remark-



able marriage ; it is the marriage of Moab and Israel. I do not think an artist would have dared to invent such a picture. A marriage of Moab and Israel was a marriage of the Gentile and the Jew. Such a union was beyond the *imagination* of later times. A novelist of the days of Esther who ventured to conceive such a thought would have been treated as an out-cast and an alien. A poet of the days of Josiah who embodied such a thought in words would have been greeted with the execration of the land. It was only in an age previous to the consolidation of Jewish ideas that the possibility of such a marriage could have been contemplated. Through all the subsequent history of Israel Moab remained her most stubborn foe. Conquered by David, held for a brief space by his successors, wrested even in the hour of its bondage, it broke away from the yoke in the days of Ahab and returned to its chain no more. It was the permanent symbol of all that was antagonistic to Israel ; the last thought which would naturally have suggested itself was the nuptial tie.

Yet, according to the Bible Gallery, this marriage was the very making of Israel. It was the germ-cell from which her glory sprang. From this marriage came the splendour of the house of Judah; from this marriage came the line of David; from this marriage, at the end of the line, came a greater than David. Looking at the matter merely from the side of art, it is well worthy of consideration. Why is it that from the very beginning there is admitted into this Jewish Gallery an element of Gentile blood? This much we can say, that it is this early union of the Gentile and the Jew that alone makes the Gallery consistent with itself. It is by the primitive germ-cell that I understand the latest growth. The latest growth is the human soul of Jesus. It is, by the admission of those *not* His disciples, a soul in which are combined the religious fervour of the Jew and the intellectual freedom of the Gentile. Where did He get that union? From above? No; this is a phase of the human — not the Divine. From David? Doubtless — David's was a many-sided life

But where did David get it?—the problem is only driven further back. There must have been an admixture of blood of which David was himself the offspring. We are driven back to the marriage bells of early Bethlehem—those marriage bells of Ruth and Boaz, of Moab and Israel, which proclaimed the primitive union of the Gentile and the Jew.

And so the birth-hour of Israel as a nation originated in an act of kindness. It came from no mightier source, from no more potent evolution. Doubtless the contemporaries of Boaz would regard him as not within the range of practical politics. They would look upon him as a very useful man—good for benevolent subscriptions and estimable for acts of charity, but too homely in his deeds to be a maker of history. Their eye would rest upon other and more noisy forms—great public speakers, great statesmen, great warriors. How completely has their judgment been reversed! History has passed all the loud forms by. It has left behind in obscurity the magnates of the time—the speakers, the

statesmen, the warriors. It has taken up the homeliest deed of the homeliest man and made it immortal. It has chosen the most modest flower of all the garden. It has planted the Empire of Israel on a deed of loving-kindness and a thought of tender mercy. The last has been first; the humblest has been exalted. The kingdom which culminated in the Rose of Sharon has found its beginning in the Lily of the Valley.

PLANT in my garden, O Lord, this Lily of Kindness! I often neglect it for more specious flowers. I seek the red rose of a great sacrifice—something which will reveal the shedding of blood. I say, 'If I could be a missionary, if I could give my life for Thy cause, that would be something Thou couldst accept; but I have neither the fire nor the wood nor the lamb, for such an offering!' And so I fold my hands in impotence. Yet, all the time, there is a field in front of my own door where I can find a larger sacrifice. Ruth

is gleaning there — young, helpless, poor! Ruth is gleaning there—with a heavy heart and a drooping spirit! Ruth is gleaning there — beset with temptations on every side! I shall get no *glory* in helping her, it will add nothing to my name. Just there lies the sacrifice, O my Father! Thy flower for me is the Lily of the Valley. The world prizes it not; it is a flower that makes no garlands for the great—it is simply kindness. But after many days it will adorn *Thy* garland. Ruth will reign by the kind word spoken; Ruth will revive by the kind deed done. The bread I have given will be her bread of life; the water I have given will be her water of life; the joy I have given will be her staff of life. My valley shall be exalted; my lily shall be lit with the morning sun; my touch of tenderness shall be transmitted to generations still unborn. I shall find my song of welcome in the music of the future; inspire my heart, O Lord, for its yet humble strain!

## CHAPTER VIII

### GIDEON THE HUMBLE

THE scientist tells us that in the world of physical nature there is always the same amount of force existing throughout the whole. There is never a diminution, there is never an increase; the sum of natural energy is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever. It is my opinion that in the moral world there exists an analogous law. We speak of some ages as ages of brilliancy, of others as ages of spiritual dearth. When we are referring to the individual lives of men, the distinction is quite legitimate. But I do not believe that in the mass there is any difference effected by time in the sum of moral energy. It is not a difference of quantity but a difference of distribution. There are, I think, two typical periods recurring throughout the history of

man—the age of crowning heights and the age of unbroken plains. The former is the period of great men—the time when vast energies are concentrated in individual breasts. The latter is the time when humanity is very much upon one level—when no record exists of present achievements, or of contemporary men rising above their fellows. Take, for example, the history of England. Compare the reign of Elizabeth with the period of Richard the Third. Popularly speaking, the former is an age of spiritual life, and the latter a time of spiritual deadness. In reality, they are both equally living, but their life is differently distributed. In Elizabeth's days the larger share is absorbed by a remarkable row of figures—the Shakespeares, the Bacons, the Marlowes, the Fords, the Massingers, the Drakes, the Cecils. In the time of Richard, on the other hand, no *individual* is spiritually very rich, but the share of each is evenly divided over the mass, and it may be that the mass itself is on a higher scale.

There is an age depicted in the Bible which

is essentially the period of great men. It is the record of that time embraced in the narrative of the Book of Judges. I do not mean that the men of that book are specially great; I mean that their greatness is specially utilised. None of them approaches Abraham or Moses or Joshua. But neither Abraham nor Moses nor Joshua is an isolated life; each moves in sympathy with his clan; his life is the life of his tribe. Far otherwise is it with the Judges of Israel. They are men selected out of the mass to initiate a movement to which the mass are inadequate. Abraham, Moses, and Joshua are each the product of a previous civilisation. But the Judges of Israel have to *make* their civilisation. The Divine call comes to each at a time of national collapse, and summons each from among lapsed masses. Each has to go forth at first alone—to create his own world. He has to awake the sleeping multitude, to rouse the dormant energies of his countrymen, to kindle into life the smouldering embers of an ancient fire. When we speak of the evolutionary growth of nations, we are



apt to forget the individual *leaps* in the process. We are apt to ignore the fact that there are flowers in many a prairie which by a quickened development spring up in a single night. We are apt to lose sight of the truth that there are ages in which the prominent factors are, not laws, not principles, not processes, but men—men who have suddenly been stimulated to take the initiative in a new movement and the plunge in a new sea. Such is the age described as the reign of Israel's Judges.

One of the most remarkable of these men from a representative point of view is Gideon the son of Joash. The remarkable thing about him is not his achievements ; it is his character ; and it is that character which we propose to study. To learn how a man is representative of humanity we ought to forget his special environment. So shall we do with Gideon. We shall forget, as much as possible, his local surroundings. We shall forget 'the Midianites' and 'the Amalekites' and 'the Children of the East.' We shall forget the prescribed method by which he was to save Israel. We shall

remember only that he was called to deliver his age from darkness and to lift his country from corruption. We shall try to lay our hand on that in him which is universal, permanent, liable to be repeated in all the coming years.

At first sight the character of Gideon is a very inconsistent one. It seems to be composed of two opposite sides—towering aspiration and drooping humility. On the one hand we see a man aflame with a great ideal and restless under its pressure. He has a prompting angel who is ever pointing him upward. He looks upon his sordid and benighted countrymen. There floats before his eyes the possibility of becoming their redeemer. He feels that their present position is incongruous with their past history. Are these the men that were brought up out of the land of Egypt! Are these the men that were kept alive in the desert by the direct power of God! Where are the *signs* of such a guidance; where is the evidence of such a protective care! If he, as a son of Israel,

has been thus privileged, should he not live worthy of his privileges! Was it not his duty to aim at the high standard set before him, nay, to lift up others to that standard! Had not his very nationality given him a mission, made it incumbent on him to fight the battles of the Lord! Was there not imposed on him a great, a responsible destiny—a destiny which he must not seek to evade! Was he not bound to become the *saviour* of Israel!

So speaks the one side of his nature—the aspiring side. But there is another side. This same Gideon is the most humble of men—the most shrinking, the most cowering, the most timorous. Our very introduction to him finds him in a timid attitude—hiding in a cellar from marauding bands. He is deeply impressed with the thought of his own incompetency. He realises the poverty of his family, the small repute of his kindred, the special insignificance which he himself exhibits in the eyes of his countrymen. His angel may applaud him, but his fellow-men decry him; and he feels that the voice of the men

will drown the voice of the angel. So far from trusting the voice of his angel, he asks material signs. In all ages—even the most modern, men in moments of self-doubt have resorted to these. I knew a very distinguished student who had an extraordinary belief that his lucky number was thirteen. Instead of hoping for success on the ground of his own merits, he would become sanguine as to the receipt of university honours if, between certain points, he had happened to take just thirteen steps—neither less nor more. Gideon's signs are something of the same nature. 'I will put my sacrifice on the fire; if the fire consume it quickly, I shall be a success.' 'I will leave a fleece exposed to the dew; if in the morning it is wet while all around is dry, I shall know that I am bound to win.' Now, on the part of the student and on the part of Gideon, this was very great humility. It was an absolute distrust of their own personality, an abandoning of all confidence in anything within them. The man whose faith in his good fortune rests on outward omens must

be a very humble man. I recur, then, to the question, how is this consistent with the other part of the character of Gideon? If he and the university student had been minds innately poor, we should not have marvelled; but that a man capable of lofty aspirings should be as distrustful of himself as if he were a village rustic—this seems an unaccountable thing.

But *is* the village rustic distrustful of himself? That is the question; and in the answer to that question lies the solution of the whole mystery. I say that the village rustic, in proportion as his rusticity is deep, is increasingly removed from humility. Humility is incompatible with absolute ignorance. Little children are not humble. Why? Simply because humility requires some degree of enlightenment. Have we considered these words of the Master, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'? On what ground does He promise the kingdom to the consciously lowly? It is because the consciously lowly have already *seen* the kingdom, 'Theirs *is* the kingdom.' It is

the vision of the kingdom that *makes* them lowly. It is their view of light on the hill that shows them the shades in the vale. It is by the sight of green fields that a man recognises his gutter. It is by the hearing of sweet sounds that the ear learns surrounding discord. It is by the contact with pure souls that the heart finds the presence of its own sin.

There is, then, no contradiction, but a beautiful harmony, between the two sides of Gideon's character. So far from interfering with his humility, his aspirations are the cause of his humility; without these his humility would not exist. It is the brightness of his ideal that makes him shrink in dismay. He beats upon his breast, and cries, 'Unclean!'—but he does so in the temple of God. He says, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!'—but he says so in the *presence* of the Lord. All the misery about his personal state, all the tossings and tempests of his soul, come, by his own admission, from his vision of the angel. He recognises the night after he has seen the day.

When Gideon has set *himself* right he proceeds to set right his people. Where does he begin? Is it by casting out their enemies? Is it by improving their environment? Is it by clearing from their path the outward sources of temptation? No; it is by changing their ideal of God. Gideon knew well that all bad things originate in bad thoughts. He begins, therefore, with the thoughts, and with those thoughts the most central of all—the thoughts about God. A man's ideal of religion is the root of his whole conduct. A bad ideal of religion is worse than no religion at all. Atheism pure and simple would in my opinion be merely paralysing; it would be what Paul attributes to the climax of trespasses and sins—a state of deadness. But the belief in a bad God is not a state of deadness; it is not even a loss of energy. A bad ideal may lend to a man a lurid strength, may fill him with a life and power as vivid and as dangerous as the drunkard's delirium. The peril of Israel at this period was not irreligion; it was too much religion of a bad kind. She had conceived a

low ideal of God, that is to say, a low ideal of what it is to be Divine. She had begun to worship Baal. To worship Baal was to worship sensuousness, if not sensuality. It was to reverence above all things the bodily nature of man—the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye and the pride of life. It was to reverence the pursuit of animal pleasures and the exercise of animal strength. It was to reverence the oppression of the weak by the strong, the reign of violence and the empire of physical force. Hosea says, 'The just will live by their faith'—in other words, 'their ideal will *make* them just.' But the other side is equally true—that the *unjust* will live by their faith. A man whose ideal of the Divine is Baal will be made unjust by his faith as surely as, by his, a Christian is justified. All badness, as well as all goodness, is the fruit of an idea. We are purified or defiled at the *fountain*—in the thought.

And so, Gideon begins at the fountain. He sets himself, before all things, to disenchant his countrymen, to dispel their false ideal.



How can he better dispel it than by associating it with feebleness! He will show that, so far from protecting *them*, Baal cannot protect Himself; he will break His image, he will cut down His groves, he will prove the emptiness of His shrine. But even in his moment of zeal there is a reassertion of his native timidity. He is afraid to break the image in the light of day; he fears to cut down the groves while it is noon. He will wait for the hush of night. He will tarry till the world is asleep and the pulse of humanity beats low. Then he will sally forth in the silence and in the solitude, and, unseen by man, he will do the work for God.

And here there presents itself to my mind a great artistic contrast. The form of Gideon stands over against another figure—that of Elijah. There is just so much resemblance between them as to emphasise the difference. Both are animated by a horror of idolatry and both have transmitted their name as the breakers of idols. Yet the course of their progress is very different—indeed, opposite. I would call Gideon an inverted Elijah. Elijah

is a man of fire to whom grace comes in the form of timidity; Gideon is a man of timidity to whom grace comes in the form of fire. Elijah begins in full flame and gradually mellows down; Gideon begins in trembling and gradually gathers heat. Elijah bursts upon our view in the court of Ahab—in the glare of notoriety and the blaze of public opinion; but we find him afterwards collapsing in the cave of Horeb, and experiencing the truth that the course of life's chariot does not run smooth. Gideon first comes before us under the shadow of night—lurking in secrecy and hiding in humility; but he ends where Elijah began—in the full view of all Israel and at the right hand of power.

And the first step to Gideon's success is effected, not by material force, but by the power of the spirit. When the worshippers of Baal come to the shrine in the morning, they find His sanctuary in ruins. They have no doubt that the perpetrator of the sacrilege is Gideon. Why, then, do they not put him to death? The answer given by the narrative is

at once clear and striking; it is the very ruin of the shrine of Baal that makes them despise their idol. They cannot adore weakness, even in their God. The Roman could; he could allow Vulcan to have a lame foot and Cupid a blind eye. But then, the Roman worshipped power of endurance, and power of endurance is compatible with calamity. The worshipper of the physical cannot adore calamity. Whatever mars the symmetry of sight is by him reprobated. The fall of Baal described in the picture is a fall from the heights of the *heart*. It is a *mental* process. Gideon has shown His impotence. Gideon has battered down His altars. Gideon has mutilated His image. Gideon has cut in pieces His groves. Has Gideon suffered for the crime? Has the lightning struck him? Has the blast withered him? Has the pestilence assailed him? No; he is alive and well; he has proved the victor, the uninjured combatant. If Baal had been able to punish him, He would have punished him; if He cannot avenge His own wrongs, He is unfit to protect Israel.

The effect of this silence of Baal is the assembling of multitudes around the banner of Gideon. His ranks swell from day to day, till his adherents number thirty-two thousand. He resolves to proceed from the expulsion of false ideals to the expulsion of their worshippers. It is at this stage that he passes from the life of the devotee into the life of the warrior; and he carries into the life of the warrior the humility which has marked his life of devotion. Before going forth to make war on the corrupters of the land, he takes an extraordinary step—a step which can only be understood in the light of his native lowliness of mind. He reduces his thirty-two thousand men to three hundred. The act seems at first sight to betoken extreme confidence, a spirit of arrogant self-assurance. But, if you look deeper, you will see that it springs from the utter abandonment of self, from the determination to sink the glory of his own name. If he goes out with thirty-two thousand, the victory will be attributed to the arm of Israel. He is jealous for *God*, jealous for the manifestation

of the Divine power. He will not suffer human agencies to bear the credit of that help which he refers to God alone. He will not have men say, 'Israel triumphed by her splendid resources, by her vast numbers, by her well-appointed army.' He will prevent them from saying so. He will reduce his material strength. He will bury his deadliest weapons. He will dismiss the bulk of his fighting men. He will go forth to battle accompanied by only a handful. So will he prove conclusively that the secret of his strength has been God alone.

This is very much what Paul means by saying, 'We have our treasure in *earthen* vessels.' The idea is that in any hour of success our richest religious comfort comes from our sense of inability to have produced that success. It is quite possible, indeed, that in the hour of his triumph a man may say, 'I always knew I was clever!'—it is quite possible and it is quite legitimate. But the comfort in this is not a religious comfort. The religious comfort of any success is the sense that I have

had nothing to do with it, that my resources were inadequate to achieve it. The more its accomplishment has been removed from human power the more we see God in it—the more we recognise in it the working of a Divine will. And what is true of outward success is not less true in a region which is still nearer to Christian experience—the region of inward peace. Let me explain what I mean.

Paul says that the peace of God is distinguished from all other kinds of peace in this, that it 'passeth understanding.' He means to say that it cannot be explained on any natural principles. It has the capacity of entering the heart when all the avenues are closed—when the doors are shut, when the windows are shut, when the apertures are hermetically sealed. There are very few of us who have not had this experience. There have been times when to the eye of all the world we have seemed to be absolutely miserable—times when, by any human calculation, we *ought* to be absolutely miserable. Clouds and darkness are round about us; thorns and briers bestrew our way.

And yet, the strange thing is that our aspect of absolute misery is deceptive. We are not miserable—spite of the clouds and darkness, spite of the thorns and briars. We feel an unaccountable strength, an inexplicable support. It has come when heart and flesh have failed in themselves to find any remedy. It has come with a sense of surprise—like the advent of an unexpected guest. It is the feeling which I attribute to the Psalmist when he utters the words, 'Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time when corn and wine increased.' He is crying out with wonder. He is expressing astonishment. Notwithstanding his outward causes for depression, he feels happier than he was when he was pointed to as a favourite of fortune. His experience seems to contradict his environment. He ought to feel heavy-hearted; his heart is light. Surely this is a strength coming from above!

Now, every religious man wants to have this experience. It is the greatest argument for the supernatural which human life reveals—an argument founded on no theory, on no

dogma, on no flight of fancy, but on sober and positive fact. It is no wonder that Gideon wished to have this experience. That he did wish to have it, is beyond all question. It was this which made him reduce his thirty-two thousand to three hundred. He said to himself: 'I want to have an evidence of *God* in my life. I want to have a peace that passeth understanding—a peace that shall be established by no big battalions, by no preponderance of material strength, by no superiority in the physical weapons of conquest, but in spite of the absence of these. I want the kingdom of righteousness to triumph through means unknown to me, uncalculated by me. I must be able to feel in my hour of victory that I have been fighting God's battle and that God has won it. How shall I learn this if my natural arm is strong and my natural force unabated! Only under the shadow of my own night shall I have evidence of the heavenly star; only by my own nothingness shall I recognise the will of God!'

Here is a great paradox—humility made a



source of confidence! But it is a paradox which has its ground in truth. Timid men are humble; but humble men need not be timid. There is a humility which makes us bold—Christian humility does. What does Paul mean by saying that where he is weak there he is strong? He means, 'My greatest confidence comes from the fact that I have succeeded in doing things which to me were impossible—above my talent, beyond my capacity; by this I know that God is working for me and in me.' Take any period of your life in which you have felt a supreme confidence in a guiding Divine hand. What has been the ground of that confidence? Simply the fact that your success in the past has been no work of yours. You feel that you have been a poor creature, without adequate knowledge or adequate foresight; yet you are conscious that you have climbed heights beyond your natural power and plucked fruits beyond your natural reach. You say, 'I have been guided all through yesterday by a power, and in a way, which I cannot comprehend;

may I not trust, under the same impending cloud, that the hand which led me yesterday will guide me through to-morrow !'

**L**ORD, give me the peace of Gideon ! Give me the peace of mind that can subsist amid stress of body ; give me the calm of soul that can live amid storms of sea ! Often is Thy peace bestowed when the world's peace is denied. Often my heart, like Gideon, sees the thirty-two thousand melt into the three hundred. Make my heart like the *strength* of Gideon ! Send me the calm that cannot be accounted for ! Send me the peace that cannot be explained ! Send me the joy which the world cannot justify ! Send me the gladness independent of glitter, the radiance independent of riches, the brightness independent of earthly benefits ! Reveal Thy rest in my wrestling, Thy crown in my cross, Thy kingdom in my cloud ! Let there ever be a dove in my deluge ! Let Thy Spirit brood on the face of my waters, and say to all the chaos,

Let there be light! Let my light precede the green grass, precede the herb and plant and tree! Let it come before the flowers come, before the fruits come! Let it shine while my world is yet a wilderness, while as yet no vines have enriched my field! So shall I learn that *Thy* peace is a peace that passeth understanding.

## CHAPTER IX

### JONATHAN THE GENEROUS

IT has often seemed to me a very singular thing that those parts of the Old Testament which come nearest to the heart are precisely the parts which belong to its rudest periods. The Old Testament has its ages of civilisation—its times of luxury and refinement. But these are not the times when it makes its deepest appeal to the instincts of the heart. The glories of a Solomon are intellectual glories ; the glories of a Jeroboam the Second are military glories ; the glories of a Hezekiah are pecuniary glories. But in all these periods I look in vain for one spot dedicated to human emotion. There are wars and rumours of war, there is peace and the produce of peace, there is luxury and the refinement of luxury ; but there is no display of that unfettered feeling which impresses so

powerfully the simple and the childlike. If you want to find that, you must go to the rude ages—to the iron ages. You must go to that desert where amid internecine strife moves an Abraham, an Isaac, a Jacob. You must go to that early Canaan in whose wilderness there is spread a table for Ruth and Boaz. You must go to that period immediately following the captivity when Israel, amid the roughness of a new beginning, burst forth into songs which have entranced the ear of the world.

Such a period is that of Saul. It is a wild age—an age of winds and waves; but the winds have struck the harp and the waves have wafted melody. Saul and his age were animated by a spirit whose home was earth, not heaven; yet they form the environment of one of the sweetest souls that have ever breathed—the man Jonathan. He is a rainbow in a storm. The son and heir of the fierce Saul, the hereditary fruit of a tribe whose symbol was a wolf—this man is the embodiment of human tenderness! He is

one of those lives who annul the distinctions in the ages—who make us say with the angel of the Apocalypse that time shall be no more. Jonathan belongs to *all* seasons of development; you will find him in spring and autumn, in summer and winter. He is not too mature for the dawn; he is not too primitive for the noonday. There are men whose speech is so free from all provincialism that we cannot tell from what part of a country they come. There is a mental, as well as a linguistic, freedom from the provinces. There are lives whom, if they stood apart, we could not attribute to any special century or any particular phase of progress. Jonathan is one of these. We cannot speak of him as a mountain rose; we cannot describe him as a lily of the valley. He belongs to mountain and valley alike; on the height and in the depth he is equally at home.

Let us stand, then, in the Gallery, and contemplate this figure—so remote and yet so near, so distant in time and yet so close to modern sympathies. What is that quality in which he is representative? We must put our

hand on that in which he is distinctively representative. It is very easy to find in Jonathan a modern quality; but that is not enough. We must discover that feature which marks him out from the rest of the Gallery. We might say, for example, that Jonathan was a man of valour; but was not Joshua the same! We might say that he was a man of piety; but was not Moses the same! We might say that he was a man who exhibited the tenacity of friendship; but was not Elisha the same! In none of these things is Jonathan distinctive. In so far as he merely represents a colour already delineated, he is not entitled to a separate description. He can only receive this on the ground of some peculiarity. What is that peculiarity? What is that quality which makes the figure of Jonathan a distinct portrait exhibiting an element of human nature which has found in him a special delineation?

I think this distinctive feature of Jonathan is generosity. I regard his portrait as the direct counterpart of the portrait of Lot. I have

defined Lot to be the man who never gave discount; Jonathan is the man who never omits to give discount. If Lot represents that class of men who exact their twenty shillings in the pound, Jonathan represents that class who are willing to accept nineteen. If Lot is the man of the law, Jonathan is the man of the gospel. If the problem of Lot is how little good he can do without incurring blame, the problem of Jonathan is how *much* good he can do without receiving praise. Lot has for his record 'I have wronged no man'; Jonathan's epitaph is 'I have made many glad.' Lot and Jonathan belong to different stages of the religious life. Lot represents the soul under the dread of God; Jonathan represents the soul under the love for man. The one is, by nature, unjust, and is only kept honest through policy; the other is almost impolitic in generosity, and requires to be restrained in the sacrifice of his own interests.

The generosity of Jonathan is not confined to a single sphere. Many are generous within a single sphere and very mean outside of



it; I have known a man give hundreds to a Sunday-school and refuse a shilling to a starving author. Jonathan is a generous man all round. We are apt to think of him merely as the friend of David. In this we do him injustice. A man may be generous within the limits of a private friendship who outside that boundary is hard and cruel. There are very few, indeed, even of the hardest and most cruel, who have not a little corner in their heart kept green for somebody—a corner which they deck with lavish hand, which they store with plenteous fruits and strew with beauteous flowers. Jonathan has his special *friendship*, but he has not his special generosity. His generosity is wider than his friendship—goes beyond its boundaries. Jonathan has a beauty of his own—apart from his relation to David. Before we meet him with the Singer of Israel, we meet him alone. Originally, he stands before us in his own person and shines by his own light. Let us consider the picture which his opening life reveals.

When the curtain rises, we are in the midst of the camp of Israel. Saul has declared war against the Philistines, and his son Jonathan leads the army. To the Jew, the service of war was as much a religious observance as the service of the sanctuary. When he went forth to battle, he went forth to battle with the enemies of the Lord. It was this that lent solemnity to his military life. He had no personal adversary; his adversaries were the adversaries of God. War was with the Israelite a sacrament. His standard of battle was a church symbol; his rallying-cry was a religious invocation; his victory was a proof of Divine favour; his defeat was an indication of Divine displeasure. And because war was to him a religious service, he prepared for it by cultivating humility. Other nations on the eve of war seek to realise their strength; Israel sought to realise her weakness. Her hour of conflict was an hour of Divine Service, and she made ready for that Service by self-abnegation. Saul was in accord with the spirit of his race. He prepared for war by imposing

a fast on the army. He enacted that the soldiers should be put on short rations. He sent them out to battle furnished with a slender commissariat—hardly enough to keep soul and body together. He did so, not in the interest of economy, but in what he believed to be the interest of religion. He wished, by the starvation of the outer man, to mark his sense of the fact that the wars of Israel were wars of the Lord.

Let us pause here for a moment to note the inveteracy of old beliefs. It is strange how persistently the idea has survived that the value of Divine worship lies in its *difficulty*. I remember being consulted as a clergyman by a young woman of high education on the subject of her spiritual state. She was distressed about her failure to fulfil the religious duties of life. I was aware that at this very time she was living a life of sacrificial devotion to a blind father. I asked if this service of hers was not a religious duty. She answered, 'Oh no! it cannot be so, because that brings me such joy; it is the delight of my heart to

serve my father!' I scarcely know whether I was amused or sad. The incident called me back to the days of the slender commissariat—back to the days when the host of Israel was made to fast that they might please the Lord. No human father would be pleased with a fasting service from his child. To any parent of earth the child's service is precious in proportion as it is painless. Man is accused of making God in his own image; why has he not done so here! Why has he not transferred to the service of a Divine Father that sense of privilege, that feeling of exultant joy, which he typically associates with the service of an earthly parent! In this instance, at least, he has erred by *not* fashioning his God after the likeness of men.

To resume the narrative. Jonathan is incensed by the military fast imposed by his father. He is incensed both on personal and sympathetic grounds; he objects to the short rations for himself, and he objects to the short rations for the army. Do you think the former sentiment weakens the force of

the latter? Do you think Jonathan would have given more evidence of generosity if he had been personally indifferent to the physical privation? I think the reverse. I hold that there is no generosity in giving to another a thing which the donor himself deems valueless. The word 'generous' literally means 'humanitarian'—sympathetic to the *race*. But how is a man to be sympathetic to the race except by transferring to the race the feelings of his own individual life. Why do I pity your pain? It is because I have felt your pain. I pity it in proportion as I have felt it. My sorrow over any sad experience of yours is exactly in the measure in which the same experience has affected myself. I think, therefore, that the artist has made a happy stroke of the pencil in placing in the foreground the *personal* discomfort of Jonathan. Nothing could have more emphasised his generosity. A hungry man stung into sympathy with the hunger of others, a man in the hour of personal destitution quickened into the pain of beholding the destitution around him—that

is the acme of generous feeling. If Lazarus, at the very moment when he is a beggar at the rich man's gate, can remember that he is only one of a thousand and can pity the nine hundred and ninety-nine, Lazarus has already reached the bosom of Abraham and won a place in the paradise of God.

Jonathan, then, prince though he was, was a friend of the masses, and was alive to their burdens. He felt that the masses would be more religious if they were better cared for. In this he was right. When a man becomes religious he should be able to bear the cross; but the cross is not a good *introduction* to religion. Christianity always placed the crown first; it spread a table in the wilderness before it revealed the de cease to be accomplished at Jerusalem. Nay, I say it with reverence, Christianity's Divine Founder began with a draught of joy. He beheld the flowers of Galilee ere there were platted for Him the thorns of Judea. Jonathan looked upon the burdens of the people, and they were not pleasant in his sight. He perceived that these

burdens were barriers at the very threshold of the religious life, and therefore at the very fountain of national prosperity. It added to his pain to reflect that these burdens were inflicted by his father. He saw that the oppressing of the poor came from the high places—the places to which by birth he himself belonged. His sympathies went out from his own class towards the burdened classes. He attached himself to what would now be called the Liberal Party. He threw in his lot with the democratic section—with those who clamoured for an increase of popular privileges. He became the darling of the people, the idol of the masses. His father looked upon him with suspicion—would have put him to death but for the favour of the multitude. Saul felt that Jonathan was undermining his political power. In reality, the youth was undermining his *own* power. His was a most disinterested benevolence. He was taking a course which must inevitably empty himself, strip himself of despotic empire. In an age which revered the Divine right of kings,

this youth beheld the glimmering of *another* right which was Divine. There broke upon him the vision of a charter granted to man as man. There dawned upon him the truth that the individual soul was more than the servant of kings. He began to realise that the unit had from God a charter of his own—that he had the Divine right to be protected, to be provided for, to be fed and housed and clothed. When that thought breaks upon a king, it is daybreak; but it is a daybreak which causes him to halt upon his thigh; he can no longer, in all the days to come, aspire to a sceptre of absolute dominion.

But now in the life of Jonathan the scene changes. When next the curtain rises, we meet him in a new environment. He is no longer the favourite of the people. He has done nothing to forfeit their favour; but another has stepped into his place. He has been eclipsed in popular esteem by a rival. Who is that rival? Here lies the sting of the position—it is a rustic lad, a shepherd boy, who has as yet done no deed of prowess and



earned no title to fame! His attractions are a fine appearance, a winning manner, and a gift of music. But these have captivated the multitude. The democracy have wheeled round. David is nearer to their own class than Jonathan. They feel that he knows more about their hardships, their difficulties, their daily toil. The thought begins to steal over them, 'Should we not have better times if this young man were king!'

The eye of Saul detects the danger. He sees the multitude strewing David's path with palm leaves, and he trembles for his own kingdom. There arises within him a bitter jealousy of the new favourite. Formerly, the interests of Jonathan had seemed against his own; he now feels that he and Jonathan are exposed to a common danger—the danger of losing their dynasty. What is more, from every worldly point of view, Saul was right. It is a mistake to conceive that his jealousy of David came from insanity. It would be more correct to say that his insanity came from contemplating his real grounds for jealousy. We miss the

point in Jonathan's character if we fail to see that it was not his interest, not the interest of his house, that he should befriend David. Saul was never less mad than when he threw the javelin at the minstrel boy. He threw that javelin in behalf of his son Jonathan. It was an act of family devotion—an act which, in his opinion, might save in the future deeper shedding of blood. For the outward fortunes of Jonathan, it was always desirable that David should die.

Now, it was through this stone wall of severance that the heart of Jonathan pierced to the heart of David. The love of Jonathan for David rests upon a totally different level from that occupied by the love of David for Jonathan. David's love for Jonathan had no barriers; it coincided with his interest. But the love of Jonathan for David had every prudential argument *against* it. He puts out his hand to save from the destroying hand of his father a man whom the popular voice had predicted to be his own supplanter. In this he is animated by a purely personal liking. He

is an absolute spendthrift for the sake of love. Nothing could more powerfully express the attitude of his mind than the passage in 1 Samuel xviii. 4, 'Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.' It is a typical statement; it describes in one sentence the whole trend of his heart. From beginning to end, the love of Jonathan for David was a disrobing, a divestiture. In every act of friendship, in every deed of devotion, in every outstretching of a protective hand, he was stripping himself of a royal garment. He was unarming himself, ungirding himself, sapping the foundations of his imperial strength—and all to gratify an impulse of human affection.

There are, I think, two forms of generous love represented in the Old Testament Gallery; the one is typed in Joseph, the other is portrayed in Jonathan. They are both expressions of love's sacrificial power; but they express it differently. The one is love sharing riches with its object; the other is love par-

ticipating in the poverty of its object. Joseph lifts his humble brother up to the height; Jonathan descends from the height to meet his humble brother. Joseph stands amid the treasures of Egypt and says, 'Come up, and be filled'; Jonathan plants himself beside the toiler in the field and cries, 'I have come down to share your struggle.' Joseph shows his generosity by clothing his tattered neighbour in a coat as many-coloured as his own; Jonathan manifests his by putting off his gorgeous raiment and preparing to assume the dress of his dependant. There have always been in the world these two forms of generous love. Even the high table-land of Christian experience—where we might expect such distinctions to disappear, reveals these two. There is a love which imputes to me its righteousness, and there is a love which bears my sin; I would call the first 'charity' and the second 'compassion.' Charity says, 'I will believe you good until I find you bad'; compassion says, 'I know you are bad, but I put myself in your place.'

Charity clothes men in her own garb of virtue till she has discovered their natural attire; compassion seeks the men of mean attire and bids them to the banquet. Charity gives the suspected man the benefit of a doubt; compassion claims kindred with him of whose guilt there is no doubt at all. Charity is a mental Joseph; compassion is a spiritual Jonathan.

To return to the *historical* Jonathan. There is yet one feature wanting to complete the picture; and it is supplied by the Great Gallery. We have seen this youth recklessly endangering all his material prospects for the sake of an individual friendship. The question arises, to what extent were the material prospects of Jonathan a matter of any interest to him? We measure a man's sacrifice, not by what he gives, but by what he feels. There have been many who, like Esau, have sold their birthright for a mess of pottage—not so much from their attraction to the pottage as from their disparagement of the birthright. Was Jonathan one of these? Did he lavish upon David what he desired not for himself?

Were the cares of state repulsive to him? Was the pomp of royalty nauseous to him? Was the glitter of rank wearisome to him? Was he at heart an ascetic—a man to whom worldly interests were nothing, to whom the greatness of his country mattered not? There have been such, even among the crowned heads of the world. There have been kings who have disrobed themselves, thrown aside their sceptre, cast their diadem into the sea, and buried themselves in a cloistered cell. And in these cases we habitually judge that their love for the cloister is not to be proved by the amount of their sacrifice. They have given up the kingdom because they loathe it; their disrobing is a disbanding; their lost crown is a lost care. Is this the thought of Jonathan? Is he weary of the world, sick of the sceptre, indifferent to the fortunes of Israel? If so, his love for David is not proved by his sacrifice. Where shall we find an answer to this crucial problem?

It comes from the sublime pencil of the artist himself. The last scene of all is also the

completing scene—the scene without which the picture would be unfinished; it is the battle of Gilboa. Jonathan dies fighting for his country, fighting for his kingdom against the Philistines. I used to think it a pity that the delineation of this narrative thus closed; it seemed a breach of art that the gentle life of Jonathan should end on the battle-field. But now I see it all, and it is all very good. I see that this apparently iron feature is that which gives softness to the whole picture. It supplies the missing link to the proof of Jonathan's love. It tells us that this man's kindness to David was not the result of hatred to imperial power. It tells us that his country was dear to him, that his dynasty was dear to him, that his father's house was dear to him—so dear that in their service he could die. In that magnificent elegy which is associated with the name of David and which has rung, not only through the Jewish Gallery but through all the galleries of earth, there is emphasis laid on the fact that 'Saul and Jonathan in their deaths were not divided.

It is a grand reflection. They had been much divided during life ; it seemed as if Jonathan had no love for his country and his home. But the last hour revealed his devotion to both, and, in so doing, it magnified the proof of his love for David. The man who would strip himself of his armour to serve David could put *on* his armour to die for his country. How dear, then, must David have been, how generous the heart of Jonathan ! What Jonathan had been willing to sacrifice was no disregarded possession, no unprized treasure, no wealth of which he was weary. It had been something for which he was ready to die ; it was something for which he did die. Gilboa throws back its lurid light upon the scene of morning love and makes it doubly beautiful. It lends to that morning what the morning itself did not reveal—the vision of a great sacrifice.

**L**ORD, grant me this love which dwelt in Jonathan ! I think it is greater than the love which dwelt in Joseph. The masses



are not ready to be lifted up to *me*; but they are quite ready for my descent to *them*. I thank Thee that Thine own earliest love has been a stooping love, a bending love, a self-emptying love. Not at first were we ripe for the mandate, 'Bring forth the fairest robe and put it on him!' Not at first were we fit for the adoption ring and the welcome home. Not at first could we participate in the music and the dancing which spoke the joy of our Father's house. And because we could not come to Thee, Thou hast come to us. Thou hast disrobed Thyself, discrowned Thyself. Thou hast taken our rags for Thy raiment. Because we could not meet Thee in Thy glory, Thou hast met us in our Galilee. Thou hast joined Thyself to the reapers in the field of Time; Thou hast borne the burden and heat of their day. Thou hast broken the bread of daily toil—yea, and blessed it too. Thou hast claimed communion with man's desert hours, his struggling hours, his fainting hours. Thou hast walked amid his sea of troubles and breasted with him the waves. Thou hast

dwelt with him in his times of mountain solitude and felt what it is to be alone. Thou hast stood in his hospitals; Thou hast watched by his sick-beds; Thou hast grieved beside his graves; Thou hast assumed his garb of labour ere asking him to wear Thy robe of righteousness. How generous, O Lord, has been Thy love for man!

## CHAPTER X

### MEPHIBOSHETH THE DEFORMED

I CAN imagine the question asked, Why pause before a portrait like this? It seems at first sight an unfruitful subject of study. Here is a man, distinguished for no great quality, an object rather for pity than for admiration—an abject man, a crouching man, an almost servile man! Amongst the *brilliant* sons of the Gallery are there not enough to choose from! Why select as one of the representative men of humanity one who even in the *Jewish* annals figures so slightly, and whose character has left no impress on the annals of mankind! Is not the examination of such a picture a waste of time!

I answer, no. It supplies a distinct desideratum. Remember what I am seeking in these studies. It is not a collection of brilliant

representative men. It is a collection of men each of whom will represent something new and different from all that has gone before. My aim is, not to make a magnificent assemblage, but to make a varied assemblage. The first question I have asked myself in standing before each portrait has been, Is this untrodden ground?—untrodden by myself? Where I have found any portrait to be simply the reproduction of an old experience, then, however brilliant its features and colouring may be, I have passed it by. Where, on the other hand, I have found a portrait which expresses a phase of human nature not expressed in all the previous survey, then, however homely be the features and however modest be the colouring, I have deemed it worthy of a lingering gaze.

Now, the portrait of Mephibosheth belongs to the latter class. It exhibits something unique. It embodies an element which is not only unrevealed in our previous survey, but which, if I mistake not, will not be found again in any part of the Jewish Gallery.

What is this unique element in the picture of Mephibosheth? What is this unparalleled feature which has made a plain face the object of universal interest, and given a permanent attraction to a countenance essentially commonplace? It is the nourishing of a deformed man by the high places of the earth; it is the world's first respectful recognition of the claims of human decrepitude. The very unheroicness of the man has made the case stronger. If he had been an Epictetus—a poor body with a rich soul, we might have said that he was accepted in *spite* of his deformity. But when we see a *commonplace* object of decrepitude loaded with the gifts of charity, when we see kindness showered on an Epictetus *without* genius, on a Talleyrand *without* sagacity, on a Pope *without* poetic insight, we know that the calamity itself has been the cause of the benevolence.

I have said that this is the world's first recognition of the claims of decrepitude. Neither Jew nor Greek were prone to recognise these claims. Jew and Greek were both

rendered unsympathetic by the same cause—religious prejudice. These nations have often been contrasted ; but there is a point in which they are at one. To both, the evidence of Divine favour is the unmarred visage. It is vain to say that the Greek is æsthetic and the Jew religious. I would rather affirm that to the religion of each, æstheticism is the common goal. The child of Greece and the child of Israel are alike worshippers of the symmetries of life. To the one, as to the other, the unblemished is the unblameable. That a man could be physically blighted and at the same time spiritually blest, that a life could be famished by earth at the very moment when it was favoured by heaven, that an outward cross could have in its own nature the dignity of a celestial crown, was a thought which never occurred to the popular mind in either nation. Remember that, to each, Church and State were one. To be a useless member of the State was to be a useless member of the Church. To be physically blemished was to be spiritually impure. To

be divorced from the service of man was to be excommunicated from the service of God.

Accordingly, in all the previous Gallery of Judea we have found no place for the incurable. There is abundant illustration of benevolent *healing*. Whenever the physical calamity is contemplated as capable of removal, it is freely sketched by the artist's pencil. We see Aaron walking amid the pestilence and pouring forth torrents of successful prayer. We see Elijah standing beside the death-couch of the young man of Zarephath and calling back the life to earth. We see Elisha prescribing a cure for the plague-stricken Syrian and allowing him to cleanse his leprosy in Israel's native stream. There is never wanting a Bethesda for the lame that are destined to walk; there is ever provided some Ananias for the Saul who is destined to see. But where the lame are never to walk, where the Sauls are never to see, we look long in the Gallery for any delineation of human help or refuge. The active sympathy for the incurable has been a very late growth, an autumn growth. It requires

a charity deeper than medical care, a charity that can live when all prospect is dead—live when hope is dead. To sustain a drooping strength which has capacities for recuperation is a great thing; but it is not the most arduous thing; the very presence of hope gives power to charity. But when there is no chance of recuperation, when there is no possibility of doing more than preserve the fragments that remain, then charity must serve by night, and its service is no summer task. A work like this needs the circling of the suns.

But while it is not surprising that our previous survey has given us no specimen of this class, it is all the more gratifying to come at last upon the missing object. Here, in the portrait of Mephibosheth, we find the thing for which we have been seeking; and our hearts are glad. The Bible Gallery re-asserts its representative character, its all-embracing character. It presents us in the world's spring with one specimen of a flower which is only to become prevalent in the world's autumn; it



shows us the first-fruits of the promised land. If in the portrait of Boaz we saw the anticipation of a Girls' Friendly Society, we see in the portrait of Mephibosheth the anticipation of a Home for Incurables. Let us examine it for a moment. The scene is touching in its modernness. It appeals to an experience which has rather grown than lessened with the years—a sense of the retarding element in the struggle for survival. It shows us how a life may be impeded by the fault of another life over whose movements it has had no control. It reveals to us a fact which is intensified as the ages roll—the interpenetration of human membership, the dependence of my lot on the act of a stranger. Our interest in the narrative is a twentieth-century interest. We feel that when we disengage ourselves from the old circumstances, when we carry the portrait from the land of Israel into the streets of London, we have in no sense diminished the living force of the picture. We are made one with the ancient world by the experience of a common suffering.

The life of Mephibosheth opens amid the storm and stress of Israel. His father Jonathan, the friend of David, has gone forth to fight against the Philistines. With him has gone forth the flower of the nation's fighting men. They are gathered on the field of Gilboa. Saul is there; his sons are there; his great commanders are there. It is an assemblage of the manly beauty and virile strength of Israel. Little Mephibosheth is left at home in the care of a nurse. He is but five years old—a child probably of vigorous limb and healthy sinew, giving promise of great deeds to come. He is amusing himself in his father's grounds on the day after the battle—under the guardianship of his female attendant. Suddenly there is heard the beating of hoofs on the outer road. In breathless haste a horseman rides into the avenue. He calls to the nurse, 'Take the child, and fly; the Philistines are upon you; Saul and Jonathan are dead, and Israel is undone!' Frantic with terror, the nurse catches up the child, and in wild haste makes for the road. But haste is a bad guardian.

The woman's arms are enfeebled by tremor. She is paralysed with fear—fear more for herself than for her charge. At each sound, real or imaginary, the heart dies within her. At last, in one dread moment of paroxysm, her arms relax their hold and their little burden falls.

When the child is lifted from the ground he is a helpless cripple; he has lost the power of both feet, and lost it irretrievably. In any age such a calamity would be dreadful; in that age it was social extinction. His fall had the effect of Adam's fall; it shut the gates of an earthly paradise. All his prospects were shattered in a moment. He could neither henceforth have the tree of knowledge nor the tree of life—neither the priesthood nor the kingdom. The priest had to be unblemished, free from physical stain; the king had to be un mutilated, sound in bone and sinew. Alike for peace or war, this future man would be disqualified. No soldier who lay dead that day on the field of Gilboa presents to my mind so sad a spectacle as

does the mangled body of that living child picked up on the road from Jezreel.

Who picked him up I do not know. Whether the woman arrested her flight to lift the fallen burden, or whether the hand of a stranger found and fed the blighted and fatherless child, I cannot tell. I will follow the example set me by the sacred narrative; I will draw a veil over the immediately succeeding years. When next the scene opens, Mephibosheth is a man. He is the last remaining of his once wide family circle. The dynasty of Saul has passed away, and David reigns where Jonathan, had he lived, would have been. Not only has Mephibosheth lost kindred and kingdom; he has lost his private property—that piece of land which belonged to his grandfather Saul and should have descended to his father Jonathan. He is in the position of a physically helpless pauper; he is without money and he is without means of making it. He has become dependent upon human charity. He has contracted the habits of a dependant. His mind crouches

like his body. He is servile, obsequious, nervously anxious to please. All the pride which dwelt in the house of Saul has been extinguished in him. One could hardly believe that this was the grandson of a man of fire, the son of a man of fearlessness. The calamity of the body has paralysed the movement of the mind.

Where is he living—this hapless youth? In a place called Lo-debar on the east of Jordan, in the house of one Machir-ben-Ammiel. Nobody can identify the place, nobody can identify the man. They are both obscure; they have faded from history. Yet I think if we could figure a recording angel writing the annals of the human race, the place would be very prominent on the map and the man very prominent in the story. This is one of the scenes which Paul would say was 'hid with Christ in God'; you must read between the lines to see it. But when you do read between the lines you see a very grand moral spectacle. Is it not as clear as day that this obscure man has been a pearl of great price.

He has performed the office of a hospital nurse for one of those cases which were not admitted to ancient hospitals. He has become the guardian, the protector, the nourisher of a deformed boy—of an incurable burden on society—without friends, without means, without influence, without talents. He has taken into his house one who, according to the laws of physical evolution, ought not to live—one unfit for the race of life, and therefore deserving to die. Without hope of recompense, without prospect of reward, stimulated only by the impulse of human pity and swayed merely by the dictates of the heart, this man has done an act beyond the compass of his time and earned his right to figure in the annals of eternity.

But there is coming to the invalid a far more august patron. David now sits upon the throne of a united Israel. He has conquered the old dynasty—Saul's dynasty. But the *memory* of the old dynasty conquers *him*. In the hour of his completed triumph there comes over him a thought of the dead past, which

prostrates him at the grave of his vanquished rival; he remembers Jonathan. Had Jonathan been alive, I believe David would never have accepted the crown. And even now when he is dead, Jonathan remains a potent power. David looks round upon the wreck and cries, 'Is there any plank left of the old ship which my friend held dear? if so, I will cherish it for ever and ever!' They bring him that tiny and shattered spar—Mephibosheth; and the heart of the king runs over. This is all that is left of his friend Jonathan—this blasted, withered branch of a once gigantic tree! David says, 'I will provide for this man; I will make him glad; I will in his case disprove the doctrine that the physically unfavoured are the socially ostracised.' He bids the wondering courtiers bring forth for him the fairest robe. Henceforth this man shall sit at the royal table, be an inmate of the royal household. He shall be adopted into the family of David; his shall be no servant's place. Nor shall he be allowed to feel that his elevation comes from favour. He shall

get back his hereditary rights. His private property shall be restored—the lands of Saul, the lands of Jonathan. All occasion shall be excluded for a sneer at his dependence. He shall be associated with his own vine and fig-tree, with his own house and lawn. Men shall be taught to think of him, nay, he shall be taught to think of himself, not as one protected through pity but as one fêted through friendship.

You will see that this is a very high charity on the part of David. It is a charity that seeks to obliterate the traces of itself by magnifying the worth of its object. The finest thing to my mind about David's act is not its physical but its moral bearing. It is not its charity to decrepitude; it is the imprimatur it puts on decrepitude itself. When a bodily defect is associated with high places it loses its stigma; it may even become the fashion. When David set Mephibosheth at his own table he did more than confer benefit on a man physically afflicted; he crowned the physical affliction. He took up the deformity



to the Mount and transfigured it. He associated the broken box with fragrance. He appended a new significance to a very old fact. He made it possible for the Book of *Job* to be written—possible for a man to be dilapidated by the strokes of fortune, broken by the winds of adversity, bent by the burdens of the world, and yet recognised as a great man, a good man, a man under the favour of heaven.

There is one thing which may seem to impair the charity of David's act. It was not originally stimulated by the pity for Mephibosheth, but by the discovery of his relationship to one whom David loved. It was, in the first instance, a vicarious deed—a benefit bestowed, not for the sake of the afflicted man, but for the sake of the man's connection with a noble stock. But if you look deeper you will find that this is the essence of all charity. I have no hesitation in saying that in its most developed form charity is partly a vicarious act—an act which looks beyond the immediate state of the sufferer. Man's benevolence to

man is greatly influenced by the fact that he *is* man—that he belongs to a kindred of the same blood with himself. Do you doubt this? Ask, then, why it is that we are more prone, or have been in the past more prone, to overlook cruelty to the animal than to overlook cruelty to the man. It is because we have been brought up to believe that the animal is of a different species; the individual has suffered through our depreciation of the race. But when we look at the injury to an individual man, there rises immediately within us a race instinct, a protest of human brotherhood. Why is it that an act of charity to an individual man is called a humanitarian act; why say that my deed to one is a deed to the whole race? Simply because when I succour the individual I have the race in my mind. I am remembering my brotherhood to humanity and the glory of that brotherhood. I am remembering that this injured man is the member of a great family—a family which has bequeathed him a birthright of high expectations, and from whose ancestral line-

age he is entitled to hope for better things than he has received. I am remembering the powerful branches of the same stem—the Sauls and Jonathans who ‘were swifter than eagles.’ My compassion is prompted by my sense of contrast—my sense of what *ought* to be.

Accordingly, when Mephibosheth is before me, what I see is not the poor maimed creature; it is the man as he *might* have been. If I thought his present condition was that of normal humanity, it would never occur to me to pity him. I do not pity a worm; I acknowledge it as after its kind one of the works of a beneficent Nature. I cannot deplore what is natural, what is the law of a creature’s being. It is where I see a creature different from its kind that I utter my protest. When Mephibosheth woke the pity of David it was because David saw standing at the side of the broken man another Mephibosheth who was *not* broken—an ideal Mephibosheth—a Mephibosheth that *should* have been. He saw him, not as he was, but as he would have appeared

in other circumstances—a stalwart, vigorous growth, with all the blood of Saul in him, with all the blood of Jonathan in him, with all the blood of Israel in him. It was the sight of the legitimate man, the normal man, the man who *ought* to have been, that made David sad, that stirred his heart to pity and nerved his hand to help.

This vicarious element is the root of Christian benevolence. It dictates all forms of helpfulness. It is my vision of the ideal man, it is my sight of the man who in other circumstances would have occupied the place of the deformed, that constitutes at once the ground and the strength of my Christian charity. Nor is this principle limited to cases of physical privation. It finds its deepest root in the moral sphere. How often you and I are called to experience the fact that the quickening of the soul awaits the resurrection of the body! We see men and women every day whose spiritual nature has been warped by their physical environment. They are like a man with a musical soul and a musical

ear and a musical message, but whose flute has a little crack in it. That little crack makes all the difference between him and the great minstrel; it arrests the birth of his melody. So is it in the music of morals. There are lives that seem a mass of inconsistency. They have moments of high aspiration, flashes of noble sentiment, depths of serious thought; yet the outcome of their being is not musical—they are among the discordant notes of the choir. Why is this? It is because the instrument by which they play has a crack in it. These men and women are waiting the resurrection of the body; *that* will put them all right. The loosening of a nerve, the tightening of a sinew, the strengthening of one of the lobes in the brain, the quickening of one of the pulses in the heart, might in a moment transform a moral sluggard into a Howard and change a frivolous life into a Florence Nightingale.

Now, what should be the Christian attitude toward such lives? It must be an attitude of hope. We must look at these men and

women, not as they are, but as in other circumstances they would have been. We must impute to them *already* the resurrection of the body. Mephibosheth makes but poor music; but Mephibosheth is deficient in many stops of the organ. How grandly Mephibosheth would have played if these stops had not been deficient! Shall we not attribute to him the missing stops! Shall we not hear in his music the notes that are not there—the notes that one day *may* be there! Shall we not grant him a wreath which he has not won—the wreath he would have worn had his equipment been complete! On what principle can I bring forth the fairest robe for the prodigal? On what principle can I put a ring on the hand that has hitherto wrought nothing but evil, and sandals for the feet that have trodden only in the mire? On the principle that the real man is as yet behind the scene, has had no chance of showing himself. We refuse to believe that this organ with defective stops and broken keys is the normal instrument. Behind the

defective stops, beneath the broken keys, we see, nay, we hear, another organ—of full equipment and of perfect tone. We hear, and we say, ‘This is the true Mephibosheth, the real Mephibosheth.’ We give the broken instrument a place in the king’s house, not for what it is, but for what it represents. We place it where we shall see and hear that other form and that other voice which it was designed to reveal, and whose message in better circumstances it may yet unfold.

**I**MPUTE to me, O Lord, the righteousness of Christ—the righteousness of the highest! Impute to me the music of the perfect organ, of the instrument with ten strings! I await, like Mephibosheth, the redemption of the body; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. I have no adequate notes to express the music that is in my soul. The song in my heart is better than the song on my lips. I have aspirings after a melody which I cannot produce. There are chords within which have

never been struck without. There are harmonies in my inner ear which my voice cannot tell, which my hand cannot play. Impute to me these wordless songs, O Lord!—I shall sing them when the redemption of the body comes. Judge me not by my *spoken* melodies! Measure me not by my *uttered* harmonies! Estimate me not by the strains which my *brother-man* has heard! Let Thine ear be open to my *inner* voice! Listen to my thoughts unspoken! Receive my prayers unsaid! Accept my sacrifices unoffered! Record my deeds unfinished! Attribute to me the life that is yet but in the germ! Behold the flower in my bud, the oak in my acorn, the fruit in my buried grain! Behold the day in my dawn, the summer in my spring, the fulness of my year in the faintness of my yearning! My streams shall make glad Thy city when they are seen in the light of the river that is to be.



## CHAPTER XI

### JONAH THE NARROW

THERE is no book of the Bible which to my mind has suffered such undue disparagement as the Book of Jonah. It is popularly treated as the butt of literature. It is regarded as the product of a very superficial intellect—a writing which has crept into the Canon unaccountably, and whose presence there should be held to be a mistake. I hold, on the other hand, that the Book of Jonah is second to no part of the Old Testament in originality of thought and breadth of conception. I hold that, so far from being the production of a superficial intellect, it is the work of a mind greatly in advance of its own time, and abreast of the highest religious culture in ours. I look upon the Book of Jonah as the counterpart of the Book of Job. Job is the study of a

moral problem; Jonah is the delineation of an intellectual difficulty. Both are designed to indicate an enlarged sense of the presence of God. Job battles against the doctrine that *pain* is a banishment from God; Jonah refutes the belief that space is a banishment from God. Job selects a suffering individual and shows that he had the Divine spirit; Jonah selects a foreign heathen city and shows that it had the Divine care. Job says, 'If I make my bed in hell, Thou art there'; Jonah cries, 'If I flee unto the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand find me.'

Let me pass from the Book of Jonah to the figure it delineates. I have often imagined an exercise proposed to the pupils of a Sunday-school to this effect: 'Write the life of Jonah in modern terms.' I think the responses to that demand would run very much in the same groove. Something like the following, it seems to me, would typify the view of the scholars:—'There once was a very loose-living youth, who cared little about religion and

spent his time in idle pleasures. This was a great grief to his parents, who had all along wanted to bring him up for the Church. In the hope that years might lend him wisdom, they tried to force him to study for the ministry. But this youth had a passion for another kind of life; he wanted to go to sea. He dreamed with rapture of the blue waves of the Mediterranean, and longed to be tossed upon its bosom. At last the importunity of his parents became so irksome and the attraction of the sea became so great, that he fled from home. He went down to the harbour and attached himself to a ship about to sail for the coast of Spain. He thought he would there be free from all moral lessons, all grave lectures, all individual restraints. But he found that in the attempt to get away he had run into the lion's den. He had come to a life which sobered him more effectually than all the lectures of his father and mother. His proud spirit was subdued; his recklessness was cured. He had been sick of home; he now became home-sick. He longed for

even the dull Sabbaths and the tedious sermons. He repented of his bad life; he resolved to make amends. He said, As a punishment for my wicked conduct I will do what my parents desire; I see that their will was God's call; I will obey the call; I will become a minister.'

Such, I think, would be the typical essay of the Sunday-school child; and I doubt not that many of its elders would say, 'Well done!' Now, we all know that there is such a youth as the one here described; the boy who runs off to sea is a very familiar object in modern life, and the result of his nautical experience is almost invariably the same as is here portrayed. But Jonah is not that boy. He is not a boy at all; already, at the opening of the scene, he is a mature man—a man of position, a man of reputation. Far from being averse to the ministry, he is already a great preacher. He is chaplain to Jeroboam the Second—the greatest sovereign who, since the days of Solomon, had filled a Jewish throne. In that monarch's brilliant court

Jonah ben-Amittai lives and labours ere ever has opened the story of the book that bears his name. We gather from 2 Kings xiv. 25, that he was the foreteller of the royal triumphs and the inspirer of the royal counsels. This is not the picture of a youth who became nautical to continue the privilege of being naughty. The truth is, if you accept the view of my hypothetical scholar, you are on a track leading in the opposite direction to the right one. Jonah is in want of discipline; but it is precisely for the contrary reason to that supposed. He needs it, not to narrow him, but to widen him—not to sober him down, but to give him wings. He is not the wild spirit of youth requiring to be contracted; he is the contracted nature requiring the spirit of youth. He must be made more intellectually daring, more sympathetically venturesome, more emotionally expanded. The danger from which he has to fly is not the danger of a fast life, but of a slow life; he awaits the opening of the prison door.

Jonah was brought up in the most narrow

period of Jewish orthodoxy—the time when Israel believed in the limitation of Divine sympathy to her own work and her own borders. She looked upon herself as the only child of the human family on whom the eye of the Father could complacently gaze. It was for her the earth was allowed to bloom. It was for her the natural mercies of God were still continued. It was for her the thunders of Divine judgment were prevented from falling. She believed herself to be the salt of the earth—that which kept the earth alive. All heathen lands were outside the sympathy of the Eternal. They moved in a circle of their own—a circle which had no point of contact with the plan of the world. The kingdom of God was a Jewish kingdom. The providence of God was a Jewish providence. The triumph of God was a Jewish triumph. Into this faith Jonah was born, in this faith he grew. He was reared in the belief of the *tribal* sympathy of God. He reached manhood in the persuasion that the salvation of the world meant the salvation of Israel, and that the climax of Divine grace

would be attained in the glory of the Jewish nation.

But all at once something happened to Jonah. It is described at the opening of the Book as a coming to him of the word of the Lord. You must not imagine it was an outside catastrophe. You must not think it came in handwriting on the wall or sounded with audible accents from the sky. When we think of it thus we miss the real feature of the portrait of Jonah; we rob him of his credit. The Divine voice that came to Jonah was a voice within him, an aspiration. He may have connected his first hearing of it with something physical—I cannot tell. But the voice itself was within; it was a part of the man, a thought in the man. And it was a thought unlike all his previous thoughts—new, startling, disturbing. It set him at variance with *himself*. It came to him in a form something like this: ‘Are there no cities of the world which are great in the sight of God except Jerusalem and Samaria! Is it conceivable that the metropolis of the mighty Assyrian Empire is disregarded by the eye of

heaven! Is not that metropolis—that city of Nineveh—the home of human hearts which are beating with all the impulses common to the life of man! Are not the chords of these hearts swept by the same winds that sweep the strings of the hearts of Israel! Are the chords of Nineveh to have no minstrel on earth and no listening ear in heaven! Can no human hand be found that shall weave these notes into harmony—a harmony that God Himself will hear! Why should not *yours* be that hand! You are a prophet to the court of Jeroboam; why should you not be a prophet to the court of Nineveh! Are you only to preach to those who need no conversion! Are there to be no *foreign* missions—no messages of God to those who specially require them! Do you not hear a voice calling you to quit your native land, to claim fresh lands for God!’

That was the call that sounded in the ear of Jonah, and it came to the inner ear of Jonah. It came as a movement of his heart—as a missionary impulse. It was the dim dawning



of that message which was hereafter to be written in golden light, 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold.' But though it spoke to Jonah's inner ear, it did not yet speak to the whole man. It was a voice to but one side of his nature—the higher side. There was a lower side of his nature to which there spoke another voice—the voice of expediency. For remember, this new thought of Jonah was, to the age in which he lived, a social heresy. It was something which, if revealed, would ostracise him. It would shake his prophetic glory, it would destroy his ministerial influence. Was he prepared to speak aloud the word which had been spoken within? Two forces strove in his heart—the old world and the new. On one side was the favour of God; on the other was the respect of man. On the one was enlarged sympathy; on the other was ancient custom. On the one was the breath of poetry; on the other was the warning touch of prudence. On the one was a vision of the future; on the other was a memory of the past. It was a choice which, on either side, involved a sacrifice.

Was there any way of avoiding both alternatives? Yes. A mode of escape was suggested to him, not by the spirit of atheism, but by the very orthodoxy of his original creed. Might not he cease to hear the Divine voice by a simple act of flight. He had been trained in the belief that the God of Israel never let His voice be heard amid objects entirely foreign—that even the pious Jew, when he sojourned in distant lands, had to carry with him some relic of his own country which would serve as a talisman of Divine communion. Had not Naaman the Syrian when he embraced the faith of Israel been obliged, ere departing from Damascus, to carry with him a heap of Jewish earth whereon to build the altar to his future God!<sup>1</sup> Jonah remembers the incident, and it suggests to him an open door. Might not he fly from his country *without* transporting the heap of earth! Might he not avoid both the voice of conscience and the voice of contumely by a flight from his native land which would be

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings v. 17.

also a flight from the Divine Presence! If he could leave every relic of Israel behind him, if he could get away into some region where the Jew had left no track, if he could sojourn in a land where he would find no fellow-countryman, meet no transplanted product and hear no borrowed song, would not the troublesome voice then be still! Would he not thenceforth interpose a wall between himself and that haunting Presence whose accents were at once so convincing and so dreadful!

But where, asks Jonah, is this region to be found? Where can he find a land in which there dwells not a reminder of *his* land—a world absolutely divorced from every Jewish association? He looks round on all the nations of the earth to find a spot which the influence of Israel has not touched. He looks in vain. In every land to which his eye turns he sees some footprint of the steps of Judaism; he feels that the presence of God will *find* him there. Suddenly a thought strikes him. There is a spot he has not yet considered. He has reconnoitred all the *land*; but is there not

an element besides the land—the sea! Is not the sea a track where Judaism has seldom journeyed! Has it not been an element hateful to the son of Israel—a path which, since the days of Moses, his countrymen have traversed with trembling! Surely *here* there will be no sacramental symbol to wake communion with God! If he can only get out upon the deep, he feels that he will be free from this haunting Divine Presence—this perpetual missionary call which, like the moaning of the wind, will not let him sleep. He will throw himself upon the bosom of this dreaded sea. The very thing which makes it dreaded by his countrymen will make it desired by him—the sense which it gives of the absence of God.

So Jonah goes down to Joppa and embarks in a ship bound for the land which is now called Spain. I do not think he had any wish to go to Spain. He wanted a sea voyage, and he chose the ship bound for the extreme west as likely to afford him the longest journey—the journey, also, towards the point most re-

mote from Nineveh. He is seeking to drown a voice by the inpouring of new associations—associations which have always suggested something foreign and unfamiliar. He has launched himself into another world. Everything about it is un-Jewish. The sea is un-Jewish; the ship is un-Jewish; the crew is un-Jewish; the objects worshipped by the crew are un-Jewish. Surely here he will escape the haunting conscience—the disconcerting message from the God of Israel!

And now something happens—something which is commonly called Jonah's punishment, but which I would rather call Jonah's revelation. Jonah's revelation comes through the sea—through the very element which he expected to obstruct revelation. It is the sea, and not the whale, that is the real saviour of Jonah. A storm darkens the face of the deep. All the winds of heaven break forth upon this ship bound for Spain; all the waves of the Mediterranean aspire to sweep over her. That storm is Jonah's deliverance—his deliverance from delusion. It brings him a message—the

very message he needs. Its voice is to him the voice of God. It says: 'Jonah, you have been trying to escape from Me. You have been thinking that Mine is a *limited* presence. You have thrown yourself on the bosom of the deep to avoid lying on *My* bosom. And on the bosom of the deep you have found Me. I have been here before you—waiting for you, expecting you. I have interrupted your journey, your flight from duty, your effort to evade My call. I have a way even through the sea, a path even through the deep; whither shall you flee from My presence!'

I have said that this voice of the storm is the real rescue of Jonah; it rescued his soul, his manhood. Long before his salvation from the outward shipwreck, he is saved from the shipwreck of his inner life. The storm made a man of him, a missionary of him. His missionary spirit took fire on the spot. Are these heathen sailors to die on *his* account! Is not he the aggressor, the delinquent! Is it not for him that the storm has been sent! Is it not he that has brought discredit on this

foreign ship; is it not he that should atone! He calls upon the sailors to throw him into the sea—to purchase their peace by his sacrifice. That call is the finest thing in the picture. It is the real miracle. It marks the enlargement of the man. It implies a transformation akin to that of Saul of Tarsus. The greatest prodigy is not Jonah's escape from the waves, but Jonah's immersion in the waves—his immersion at his own desire. He could only ask to be thrown into that element of death by reason of the fact that he had already entered into an element of larger life—an environment in which his Jewish nature had recognised the common need of man.

Here, so far as the moralist is concerned, closes the first scene in the life of Jonah. When the second scene opens we are in a new atmosphere. Jonah has been physically rescued from the storm and he has been spiritually rescued *by* the storm. He has reached a definite conviction—that the Spirit of God is brooding over the face of the heathen waters. He has arrived at the conclusion that

his pity for Nineveh is God's pity for Nineveh — God's imperative mandate to his soul to give that city the words of eternal life. He has obeyed that mandate. He has gone down to Nineveh. He has stood in her streets and proclaimed her danger. He has called on her to repent and flee from the wrath to come. But a question remains. What does Jonah *understand* by Nineveh's repentance? Does he mean that if the city experiences the natural remorse of conscience and resolves to lead for the future a better life, she will receive the mercy of God? No; Jonah is not broad enough for *that*. He has only learned half of the truth. He has learned that God desires the salvation of the heathen city from an impending doom. But will God avert the doom of that city while it *remains* heathen? Jonah says, no. To him the escape of Nineveh must be made via Jerusalem, via Samaria, via some part of Israel. If the heathen city would be saved, it must become a Jewish city. It must kneel as a suppliant at the altar of Jonah's people. It must keep the Sabbath.



It must be circumcised, or, at the least, must become 'a proselyte of the gate.' Will God accept mere natural religion! Will He be content to receive as an offering the fruits of a heathen soil! Will He consent to pardon Nineveh, not for the sake of Moses, but for her own sake—not because she has accepted the laws of Sinai, but because she has heard the voice of the secular conscience!

Let me put Jonah's difficulty clearly. His message has been, 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!' It has been entirely effective. The city has been stirred to its depths. Panic has seized all classes, from the king to the beggar. A fast has been proclaimed in the hope of obviating the wrath of Heaven, and by a royal decree all ranks of society are commanded to conform to it. Now, remember what this fast was. It was a purely Assyrian ceremony. It did not take the form which a fast would have taken in Israel. It took a heathen form, a Gentile form, a thoroughly grotesque form. The rules given were such as betokened a benighted

condition. Will God *accept* this foreign sacrament? asks Jonah. Will He extend pardon to men who seek it through a heathen ceremony? 'Surely not!' he answers; the very thought makes him angry. He wants the city to be saved, but saved by legitimate means—means consistent with Jewish patriotism. If the Ninevites want to fast, let them come up to his wilderness and fast; if they want to pray, let them come up to his temple and pray; thus and not otherwise may they hope for the mercy of God.

But the forty days pass, and the destruction comes not. A wave of Jewish reaction sweeps over Jonah. He has been liberal up to a certain point—liberal beyond his age. But he finds here an arrest to his opening liberality. It offends him as a patriot that a Ninevite, as a Ninevite, should win the heart of God. There is required for Jonah a second rescue from his own narrowness. The first stage of his deliverance had been secured by the storm. From that storm he had come forth enlarged, but not perfected. There is

still a dividing wall between him and freedom. Who shall break it down? Who shall usher him into the open? Who shall bring him into the presence of a God without fences, without barriers, without limits? Who shall reveal to him the truth that Divine love can travel by its own wings and reach a heathen city without the aid of Jewish chariots?

That revelation comes to Jonah in a most extraordinary way — extraordinary in its simplicity. The first revelation had been remarkable in its pageantry. It had come in the rolling of the waves, in the shrieking of the winds, in the darkening of the skies. But this second revelation is to enter by a silent door—a door whose opening none will hear. It is to reach the heart of Jonah by a common-place avenue—an avenue which has been for years but an ordinary carriage-drive. With no moaning of the sea, no shaking of the trees, no flying of the birds, is it to come. It is to manifest its presence in an incident too trifling to be historical, in an experience too minute to be recorded by human annals. We

make a transition from the roaring ocean to the restful harbour. We pass from the Mediterranean into the meadow. We exchange the sublime for the simple. We follow the prophet of God from the scene where man feels his insignificance to the scene where man realises his superiority—from the heaving of the great deep to the waving of the autumn field.

Jonah has gone to sit in that field. He is in discontented mood—inclined to murmur against the order of things. The day is sultry; the sunbeams smite the grass like shafts of fire. The prophet is oppressed with the heat; he feels weary and jaded. Suddenly he remembers a delightful little harbour which had sheltered him yesterday—a resting-place in the field, overshadowed by a gourd or shrub of wide-spreading leaves. He will go to that cooling shade, he will recline under that protective foliage; it will be to him as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. He repairs to the spot where used to spread the healing plant. The spot is there, the seat is there;

but the plant is gone ; it has faded in the past night. Jonah's rage bursts forth ; this is the last straw, and it breaks his last thread of patience. He pours out the vials of his wrath over this vacant spot of the universe—this little bit of ground despoiled of a plant which had been its tenant for a day.

All at once another voice spoke within Jonah—a voice very like that which he had heard in the Court of Jeroboam. It said: 'Jonah, are you not at this moment refuting the grounds for your own discontent! Is not your very anger an argument against yourself! You have taken an interest in a most insignificant thing—a thing which you admit to be unfit for your companionship; why should not the Almighty have the same interest in *Nineveh*! *Nineveh* cannot reach up to *Him* any more than the gourd can reach up to *you*; but you can come down to the gourd; you can give your presence and your interest to the insignificant plant. Are you to have a power that the Almighty has not—the power of going down! You accepted the service of

a plant which was a plant of Nineveh. You did not insist on first bearing it to Jerusalem, to Samaria, to some part of Israel. You sat down yesterday beneath its foliage in this very spot; its shade was as precious to you as if it had been a Jewish shade. And shall not *God* accept the service of Nineveh! Though its fast be a heathen fast, though its cry be a cry of nature, though its repentance be the repentance of the natural conscience, though its voice be the voice, not of the man in the temple, but of the man in the street, shall not God accept its service! By the very anger of your soul you have justified the ways of heaven.'

From that hour in the fields of Nineveh Jonah returned, a changed man. The voice that spoke *to* him was the voice that spoke *in* him. He never could have heard it if the door of his heart had not been already open. For the second time God had revealed to him that he could not flee from His presence. For the second time he had found that Presence in an unlikely spot. He had already found it in the solitudes of the great deep, where one would

have thought it unnecessary; and he had now discovered it in the midst of a heathen city, in the observance of a heathen ritual, in the conscience of a heathen community. In the silent thoughts of one human soul there had struck another hour in the progress of life's day; and in the heart of an individual man humanity had taken its first step into a field of wider development.

**R**EVEAL to me, O Father, the breadth of Thy Divine presence! I *too* am prone to narrow Thee. I have refused to see Thy presence in Nineveh. I have been quite willing that Nineveh should come to my Jerusalem, to my temple, to my altar; I have always offered her an open door into the house where I worship. But I have never dreamed that Nineveh can get a blessing within her own temple. I have never dreamed that a fast in a heathen city may be a fast of real communion. I have never dreamed that an altar built to other names than Thine can have a step lead-

ing to the sky. Teach me that truth, O Lord! Teach me that Thou claimest all prayers as prayers to *Thee*! I see the men of Nineveh adoring inferior things, and I cry, 'These are idolaters!' but *Thou* sayest, 'Inasmuch as they did it unto the least, they have done it unto Me.' Often have I thought of these words of Thine, 'Shall I not spare Nineveh, in which are more than six score thousand infants and much cattle!' I think I understand their meaning. It is that even the unspoken cry of the infant, even the inarticulate cry of the cattle, has to Thee the import of a prayer. O Love, Divine Love, imputing to me, to Nineveh, to all things, more than the voice can ask or the thought express, let us magnify Thy name together! Thou answerest, not our words but our needs; unite us by our needs! Unite us under the withered gourd, the common want, the kindred pain! Whether our fast be at Jerusalem or at Nineveh, it is the same want and the same cry; let us feel it to be the same worship too! Send us the Day of Pentecost once more! We have many



tongues in the flesh ; let us speak one language in the spirit. We have many creeds in the mind ; let us recognise a common craving in the heart ! We fix our trembling gaze each on a different star ; tell us that through them all we see one golden light !

## CHAPTER XII

### HEZEKIAH THE DEVOUT

IN these studies I feel myself in the position of a man seeking appropriate inscriptions for tombstones. I want in each case to find an epitaph which will concentrate into a single expression the whole character of the portrait—which will indicate, not a phase of the life, not an incident of the life, not an abnormal feature of the life, but a summing up of the life itself from its dawn to its setting. What shall be my inscription on the portrait of Hezekiah? He is one of the best-known figures in the Gallery; but that does not make it more easy to write his inscription—rather the reverse. We do not analyse that with which we are most familiar. Hezekiah is one of the Jewish heroes. There is no picture in the Gallery on which his countrymen have so prolonged their gaze. He shines out as the

second David, as the nearest approach to the glory of the nation's age of gold. And yet all this is an illusion. When we scrutinise the picture, the impression is not sustained. There is no real analogy between Hezekiah and David. In one sense, there is a contrast. David is a natural genius illuminated by grace; Hezekiah is a commonplace mind illuminated by grace. David is inherent beauty rendered more attractive by dress; Hezekiah is inherent plainness to which dress imparts a beauty. David is a rich nature intensified; Hezekiah is a meagre nature enriched.

What, then, shall be our inscription on the life of this king? Shall we call him great? No; he did not really arrest the decadence of his country. Shall we call him brave? No; we shall see that, naturally, he was deficient in courage. Shall we call him wise? No; we shall find that, in his own strength, he exhibited a shallow policy. But it is quite a common thing to see a soul transformed by the advent of a great love into qualities the opposite of its own. Love makes the timid brave, love

makes the foolish wise. So was it with Hezekiah. There came to him at a certain moment of his life the sense of a great love. I know not when it broke upon him; judging from the concluding verse of 2 Chron. xxix., I should say its influence was sudden—dating from the solemn hour of his coronation. What was this mighty love which entered the soul of Hezekiah? It was no earthly passion, no sensuous attachment, no worldly preoccupation of the heart. It was that form of love which is found in saints and martyrs—the love of God. Yet upon the man it had the same effect as any earthly passion—it transformed him, metamorphosed him, made a new creature of him. It gave firmness to a vacillating nature; it lent energy to a weak will; it inspired boldness in a naturally shrinking spirit. Hezekiah is, in truth, a type of the man under the influence of a religious revival. He represents the commonplace mind possessed by a new emotion. He stands as the symbol of that exaltation which may come to a very ordinary life when

fired by Divine enthusiasm. He typifies that empire over which he rules—an empire humanly insignificant, slenderly endowed, meagrely furnished, inadequately equipped for a struggle with surrounding forces, yet rearing a proud head and presenting a brave front, through the promises and the potencies of a unique religious faith.

Hezekiah, then, is essentially the devout man—the man of God; this is his distinctive characteristic; apart from this he is nothing. As I study his portrait in the Great Gallery, four successive scenes rise into view. I will call them metaphorically the four hours in Hezekiah's day—the hour in the street, the hour on the sea, the hour in the vale, and the hour on the hill. Each reveals a separate aspect of the religious life—an aspect as familiar to modern England as it was to the heart of ancient Israel. Let us consider these four manifestations of the Divine life as exhibited in the experience of Hezekiah.

The first scene opens in the street—amid the surging of the crowd. Hezekiah is seen

gazing on that crowd. He is twenty-five years old; he has been called to the throne by the death of his father Ahaz. And suddenly it occurs to him that by the fact of his kingship he stands to that multitude in a new relation. It seems to him that he has become this morning the man responsible for the sins of the people, the man on whose shoulders must fall the burden of all the evil they may do. He feels himself lifted to a high moral altitude—a height which makes him dizzy with its terrible suggestions of a fall. In the eyes of the young king the fall, so far as the multitude are concerned, is already an accomplished fact. He sees a city wholly given to idolatry—the idolising of pleasures which are not pure. He sees that the life of his father has been the cause of this badness, that the crowd have taken their morals from the crown. He sees that the crown must give back to the people that virtue of which it has despoiled them, that it has fallen to him to make atonement for his father's sins. He feels that the attractions

to an irreligious life must be suppressed at all hazards and by the most drastic means. The people must be drawn from the worship of the world to the worship of God, and they must be drawn by the shutting of the world's gates. Let their pleasures be prohibited! Let their carnal haunts be closed! Let their gaming-tables be broken! Let their drinking orgies be forbidden! Let their luxury in dress be restrained and their extravagant expenditure moderated! Put out the world's street-lamps and leave its votaries in the dark; then, perhaps, will they seek the kingdom of God!

Such is Hezekiah's thought; and it is conceived in the spirit of a revivalist. But that is only one half of his thought. Hezekiah sees something beyond this—something which the ordinary revivalist does not always see. He perceives that it is not enough to debar from worldly attractions; there must be created unworldly attractions. He feels that the people will never be drawn into the temple of God by the mere destruction of

their heathen images; the temple itself must be beautified. Why had men resorted to unhallowed shrines? Was it not because the temple of the true God was in a condition unworthy of itself, unworthy of Him! Had they not been driven to seek beauty among the heathen because there was no beauty among the faithful! Why should the temple of Jerusalem not be made as attractive as the groves of Ashtaroath? Was loveliness a monopoly of the wicked! Was aestheticism a prerogative of the sinner! Were the charms of secular art in the exclusive possession of the ungodly! Had the Divine Spirit *alone* nothing to draw with, nothing by which to attract the world! It was easy to turn out the lamps in the street; but that was merely to create inability to do mischief. What was wanted was ability to do good. To get that, there must not only be an extinction of the street lamps but a lighting of the lamps of the temple. The temple had been too long dark. Worship had been too long gloomy. Religion had been too long a symbol of



sombreness. If the courts of the Lord were to become the haunts of fashion, it was *God* that must say to the world 'Let there be light!'

Such is the thought of Hezekiah. I am deeply struck with the prominence it receives in a document which is commonly considered the most prosaic writing in the Bible—the Book of Chronicles. Nothing could be more artistic than the statement of that book. With fine discrimination it declares emphatically that reconstruction preceded destruction—that before one heathen image was broken, before one idolatrous grove was cut down, before one worldly pleasure was suppressed, the temple of God was made bright and beautiful. The positive came before the negative; the new was provided ere the old was prohibited. It must ever be so in every work of reform. Paul expresses the idea very finely when he says, 'Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' It is as if he had said: 'It is no use trying to cure bad passions by Act of Parliament; it is vain to attempt the inauguration of virtue

by the tying of the hands. If you want men to avoid walking in the counsel of the ungodly, you must place their delight in the Law of the Lord. The flesh cannot be conquered by legal enactment, cannot be subdued by privation, cannot be debarred by shutting the door. The entrance of the new must precede the expulsion of the old ; the breath of spring must come while winter fills the air.' And truly Paul is right. The passions of the evil heart can be removed by killing them ; but if you *begin* with that, you pluck up wheat and tares together ; you keep the heart from acting wickedly by forbidding it to act at all. Your remedy for bad passion must not be passionlessness ; it must be the Lord's Passion—the breath of pure love. Vice can only be cured on the homeopathic principle. If you remove the old wine you must provide new wine ; and the new wine should be put into bottles not dissimilar in form to those which held the old. If Hezekiah would abolish the groves of Ashtaroth, he must first adorn the temple of Jerusalem.

So closes Hezekiah's first hour—the hour in the street. When next he appears before us, the scene is changed. If his morning hour is in the street, his forenoon hour is, metaphorically, on the sea. There has come a storm. The ship of the Jewish State is lashed with foam and her timbers are creaking. That storm is Sennacherib. Sennacherib is coming with all the hosts of Assyria—Sennacherib the impious, the terrible. He is coming to ravage the City of God—to destroy the dwelling-place of the Most High. Who shall withstand the day of his appearing! Already have the surrounding nations sunk before him. Even the land of Samaria has fallen—the twin sister of Judah, the twin daughter of Jacob. What will Hezekiah do? Any ancient gallery but that of the Bible would, in the interest of a national hero, have concealed what follows. Any ancient gallery but that of the Bible would have depicted its Hezekiah as coming forth to die—hopeless of the fight, yet ready for the martyr's doom. But the Bible has an artistic purpose to fulfil

far beyond the flattering of national patriotism. It shows Hezekiah as he was. It represents him in the first instance as frightened, trembling, panic-struck. He flies to the temple. He gathers the silver which had been stored there. He strips the doors and the pillars of the gold with which he had beautified them. He dismantles that house of God which he had just adorned; he despoils it of its treasures. He brings out these treasures. He sends them as a tribute to Sennacherib. He prostrates himself in vassalage. He purchases peace by the wealth meant for the Lord.

Are you surprised that I regard this exposure of Hezekiah's weakness as a stroke of art? Do you not see that, if a man is to be painted whose strength is in God alone, it must be shown that he has no natural strength. What is the problem which the Bible artist has here before him? It is the depicting of a life that shall be timid by nature and brave by grace. Could anything be better done, more artistically done? We see at the outset the

man Hezekiah as nature made him—a most unheroic figure, an abject, trembling figure. We see a soul paralysed with terror in the presence of his foe, speechless and prostrate before a danger which he is powerless to avert and impotent to face. But even as we gaze upon the humiliating spectacle we feel that it is to be but the dark background of a great glory. We feel that it is meant to intensify something which the pencil is about to produce. That something is a delineation of what can be done by the unaided grace of God. You have seen a conjurer offer to put articles into an empty box through supernatural channels. The first thing he does is to make you quite sure that the box is empty. ‘Look at it!’ he says, ‘be certain there is nothing in it!’ So is it with this artist of Divine things. He says, ‘I am going to show you that God can put treasures into a vacant mind. Be quite certain at the outset that this mind *is* vacant! Look at this poor creature Hezekiah! See how empty he is, how barren he is, how useless he is!

See what a poor, shivering, trembling soul he is by nature—how unable to be a man, how unfit to be a king! Truly the box is empty!’

By and by the box is shut ; and, when next it is opened, a startling spectacle presents itself—the vacant space has been filled ! We see nothing to account for the change. No hand has been visible at work, no process of replenishment has been observed. When last we saw the cavity, it was void ; it is now entirely occupied. To drop the metaphor : In a short time after the manifestation of his abject terror, Hezekiah appears before us full of courage, radiant with hope. When last we parted with him he was prostrate in the dust ; when next we meet him he is erect with the bearing of a soldier—a soldier confident of victory. And the strange thing is that, so far as the eye can see, there is nothing to account for the change. There is no more ground for natural hope now than there was when he lay grovelling in fear. Sennacherib has not departed. The Assyrian host has not declined.

The resources of Judah have not increased.<sup>1</sup> The material condition of things is exactly what it was—neither better nor worse. It is just the case of Simon Peter, but in inverted order. Peter looked at the raging sea—he first laughed and then began to cry; Hezekiah looked at the raging sea—he first cried and then began to laugh. But neither in Peter's case nor Hezekiah's was there any change in the *sea* to explain the change in their mind. The wind was the same, the waves were the same, the clouds were the same; there was no alteration on the face of the *deep*.

Whence, then, came this transformation of Hezekiah? From within. It was a strengthening of the mind. He had sought a place of prayer in the interval, and that place had made a man of him. He had gone in, a coward; he had come out, a hero. The whole art of the picture is made to centre in the breath of God. Hezekiah in himself is nothing; he is only strong in the presence of

<sup>1</sup> Strictly speaking, there had been left to Judah nothing but Jerusalem and its environs.

the Lord. The triumph of the Divine Spirit, as exhibited by this artist, does not lie in the destruction of Sennacherib's host. It lies in the transformation of Hezekiah. It lies in the fact that the breath of God can make a coward brave, a craven bold, a pessimist hopeful, a mourner joyous, a croucher kingly. That was the real victory over the power of Sennacherib!

The third scene comes. It is Hezekiah's hour in the vale. It is a distinctly different experience from the other two. These had one thing in common—they were both public scenes. The danger in the street and the danger in the storm were dangers which Hezekiah shared with his *people*. But now there has dawned for him an hour of solitary trouble—that kind of trouble hardest to bear. He is prostrated on a bed of sickness—on what to all appearance is a bed of death. And here we are confronted by a paradox—one of those touches of artistic originality which are peculiar to the Gallery of the Bible. It is no uncommon thing to find men shrink back from the dark valley. But what causes



them to shrink back is commonly supposed to be the sense of their own unworthiness. Here, we have an extraordinary combination of the sense of fear with the sense of rectitude—a blending of feelings to which I can recall no parallel. At one and the same moment Hezekiah experiences an intense shrinking from death and an intense conviction of having done his duty. He had displayed timidity before the host of Sennacherib; but on that occasion he had forgotten the presence of God. Here, he displays the same timidity in the full view of God's presence. He is quite conscious that God is beside him; he is quite certain that his soul is in a right attitude towards God. Yet, in spite of his sense of rectitude, in spite of the approving voice of his own conscience, he is filled with deepest loathing for the Valley of the Shadow. We can account for the *bad* man's terror in the hour of death; we can account for the sadness at such an hour from the sense of a work unfulfilled; but how are we to explain such a combination as this—'I beseech Thee, O Lord, remember now how I

have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore'!

I explain it by an appeal to sober fact. I say it is on the spiritualised nature that death bears most heavily. What else does Paul mean when he says, 'If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable'! He means that a man who, like Hezekiah, is without the hope of immortality will at the approach of death be sad just in proportion to the spiritual height of his nature. For remember, in these circumstances it is the spiritual nature that is the real sufferer. Other parts of our being are apt to be blunted by disease. The passions of the body tend to exhaust themselves *with* the body. The pleasures of the world lose their zest when life's pulse is low. The objects of our physical ambition would have their attractions dulled by time even though there were no death. But where the spiritual nature exists, it is never dulled by time. Religion is not fresher with the young than with the old. The sense

of wonder—which is the essence of worship—rather grows than declines with years. Our conviction of a mystic Presence deepens as we go. Knowledge but intensifies it; experience but enriches it. To a man with such a conviction death, if it comes without the hope of immortality, must come as a foe. I have been greatly struck with one of the utterances of a Psalmist of Israel when lying under the shadow of the dark valley, ‘In death there is no remembrance of Thee; in the grave who will give Thee thanks!’ His one sigh was for parting with *God*; his one tear was for losing the presence of God; his one lament was for cancelling the soul’s remembrance of God. He does not say, ‘I grieve to quit the flowers and woods and hills.’ He does not cry, ‘I mourn to leave the purple and fine linen and sumptuous fare of the world’s day.’ All these losses are forgotten in one poignant pain, ‘In death there is no remembrance of *Thee*.’

I come to the fourth hour—the hour on the hill. For the first time in his life Hezekiah has an unclouded prospect. His days have

been prolonged; he has been restored to health and strength. The enthusiastic devotion of his people has welcomed him back from the gates of death. Rich offerings of thanksgiving pour into the treasury. At home and abroad the hearts of men are opened to signify their gratitude for his restoration, and from all quarters costly gifts flow in. It is the only moment of his reign in which Hezekiah has been free from struggle. All the preceding scenes had been scenes fraught with fear; this is a mountain view, a cloudless view, the view given by a summer day.

And now comes the strange thing. This hour of prosperity, this hour on the hill, is the only hour in which Hezekiah suffers actual loss. He has passed through the furnaces of sorrow and got no hurt; but he is singed by the blaze of prosperity. 'Singed' is indeed the word. He is not burned, he is not scorched, he is not disabled; it is but a grazing of the wing; yet it dims the wing's beauty. The bird does not fall from the sky; but it flies lower. Hezekiah does not

commit a great sin. What he reveals is a petty weakness—a pride of material display. He is like a child with a new toy. He throws open his treasures to the inspection of the king of Babylon. In thus tempting the Babylonian he prepares a fall for his own descendants; but it is not in this I see his loss. His loss is from within. He has dropped something of the *inner* gold; he has become proud of the wrong thing. He has become satisfied, also, with the wrong security. When told that his conduct will bring ruin to his successors, he says, in effect, 'Never mind, there will be peace in *my* time.' This jars upon us. A king should not only be his own keeper, but his brother's keeper. He is meant to be more than the custodian of his personal power; he is set to guard the power of those who come after him. Is it not a pity we have this parting blot in the narrative! Should not art have secured a cloudless ending! Why bring Hezekiah triumphantly through his actual troubles, and obscure the glory of that hour when his troubles have passed away!

Now, I say that the art has here been beautiful, consummate. It supplies the one lesson that Judaism needed. To the spectators in that Gallery the only sad vision was a vision of adversity. That a man should be tarnished in the street, that a man should be shaken on the sea, that a man should be depressed in the vale—all this was felt to be natural. But that a man should be corrupted on the hill, that the hour of *prosperity* should be an hour of moral danger—this was a new thing. Men had learned to pray, ‘In all time of our tribulation, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, good Lord deliver us!’ but they had not learned to pray, ‘Deliver us in all time of our *wealth!*’ They could see the need for a rod and staff in passing through the Valley of the Shadow; but to cry for a rod and staff in passing through the green pastures and standing by the quiet waters—that was a strange prayer. And that was the prayer taught by Hezekiah’s hill. It told the Jew not to limit his dread to the precipice. It told him to beware of the *flowers*. It bade

him seek God in his sunshine. It revealed that the thorn was not man's greatest calamity. It inspired distrust of the rose, distrust of the summer day. It taught that the shade was required as well as the shining. It exhorted the human spirit not to despise the shadows cast by the tree of life. That was the high lesson proclaimed by Hezekiah's hill.

TEACH me, O Lord, that I need, not only Thy pillar of fire by night, but Thy pillar of cloud by day! I never cease to value the first; but I often forget the last. I always thank Thee for the stars in my night; but I seldom bless Thee for the spots in my sun. I have praised Thee for the silver lining in my cloud; but I have raised no monument to my cloud itself. And yet, there are things which the shadow alone can reveal. My deepest gain is to find my want of Thee. Why has Thy pillar of cloud hovered around my day? It is to keep alive my hunger for Thee, my thirst for Thee. I need Thy shadow

as much as Thy light. I would rather pray, 'Lead me!' than 'Light me!' If I could see all the way before me, I should lose the need of Thine arm; Thy leading means my leaning. Therefore, O Father, keep me from the dangers of the hill! Keep me from the perils of prosperity! Keep me from the fire without the cloud! Be the shade at my right hand that the sun smite me not! Protect me from my pride! Guard me from my glamour! Save me from my self-sufficiency! Rescue me from my recklessness! Hold me back from my heights of presumption! Pity me in the day of my power! Watch over me in the hour of my wealth! Guide me in the scene of my glory! Succour me in the summer of my year! Only then, with confidence, shall I 'lift up mine eyes unto the *hills.*'



## CHAPTER XIII

### ISAIAH THE PHILANTHROPIST

THERE is one point which must often have struck the student of the Jewish Gallery, and that is the contrast between its delineation of the rulers and its delineation of the prophets. In the portrayal of its patriarchs, in the description of its judges, in the presentation of its warriors, in the exhibition of its kings, in the disclosure of its family circles, the Gallery displays a graphicness which is unique. But as we pass from these spheres into the sphere of the prophets, we see a great change. Here, we are ushered into a compartment of the Gallery which, in the estimation of the Jew, is the main compartment. We should expect it to be distinguished from the others by a greater fulness of detail. On the contrary, we find a desertion of detail altogether. The figures become

mere outlines, and the outlines themselves are shadowy. We see no more the tracing of a life from dawn to eve. Neither morning nor evening is there, nor is there a clear revealing of the midday. A silhouetted form stands before us whose face is hid, whose expression is veiled, whose very attitude is but dimly recognised. Contrast the portraits of an Abraham, an Isaac, a Jacob, a Joseph, with the portraits of an Amos, an Isaiah, a Jeremiah, an Ezekiel, and you will see the full force of the difference. The former are almost modern in the interest they awaken ; the latter seem far away. The former are men ; the latter are shadows. The former suggest the living world ; the latter come like voices from the dead.

How are we to account for this? Is it accident? No, it is too methodical for that ; a thing which pervades one class exclusively cannot be accidental. Is it ignorance on the part of the delineator? No, why should the artist know less of Isaiah than of Abraham ; Isaiah belonged to an age when knowledge was more easily transmitted than it was in

the days of Abraham. Is it the uneventfulness of a prophet's life in comparison with a ruler's life? No, for the facts we wish to learn are just the common uneventful facts that environ men of every day—the place of birth, the home circle, the training influences, the worldly circumstances, the struggles for survival, the loves and hates and hopes and fears that compose the lights and shadows of human life. This is what we want to know; this is what is not revealed.

Is there any explanation which can be suggested for this biographical reticence? I think there is. I believe it originates in the notion that a man's religious message has more power when separated from his personal circumstances. This is not a feeling peculiar to the Jew. It lies at the root of clerical celibacy; it forms the basis of religious asceticism. There has ever been a widespread impression that familiarity with the teacher of sacred things weakens the force of his message. How often you and I are disappointed when we have realised our wish to meet some distin-

guished educator of the race. We have figured to ourselves the joy of that meeting—how our hearts will burn, how our souls will be enlightened. And we have found the man a very ordinary individual, with the average amount of human frailties and perhaps more than the average amount of human foibles. The man who habitually lives on the mountains is apt to find himself not at home on the plains. He often shows to less advantage in commonplace things than the essentially commonplace man. The Jew felt this and sought to obviate it. He withdrew the everyday life of his prophets from common observation. He placed his Isaiah in the mist. He shrouded his form and features. He hid his environment. He concealed his domestic altar. He threw a veil over his circle and his circumstances. He allowed only his *voice* to be revealed. He would not let us look, but he bade us listen. He sent a cloud to the eye, but he lifted a curtain from the ear.

To the ear, then, let us appeal. Let us listen to the voice of this man Isaiah. Hun-

dreds have listened to that voice for purposes of doctrine, for messages of prophecy, for exercises of criticism. But for none of these objects would I be here an auditor. I am not in search of the prophet, but of the man. I wish to see whether the knowledge which has been shut out by one entrance has been admitted by another. If we adopt the modern limits to the authorship of Isaiah, we have thirty-nine chapters recording his literary utterances. Are these utterances wholly impersonal! Do they reveal only the destiny of nations, the fate of despots, the fall of potentates! Do they lift merely the veil of history! Do they not lift a veil also from the prophet's own life and give us some notes of an autobiography! Men have told character by the handwriting; shall they not tell character by the heart-writing! Shall a literary product reveal the spirit of its age and be silent as to the spirit of its author! If it be the spontaneous expression of thought and not the imitation of another's thought, then it is as distinctly a biographical record as if it

had been the jotting of a diary or the recalling into memory of a vanished hour. Let us look therefore for the man in the manuscript. Let us try to penetrate beneath the literary veil—to see the face of the singer, to read the form of the thinker. Let us consider whether, amid the many revealings from Isaiah's pen, there has been omitted that of the object nearest to himself—his own soul.

We have not read far ere we are arrested by a note of autobiography. It is a note of a very peculiar kind. When a man gives a record of his life he usually begins by telling when and where he was born. Isaiah begins by telling where he was 'born again.' To him his real birth was the birth of his spirit. His natal day was the day of his conversion. He is conscious of one crisis moment—a moment which rises above the level of his life as a mountain rises above the level of the sea—a drastic moment, a dreadful moment, a moment when, like Jacob, he saw the ladder between earth and heaven. It seemed to him that he stood in the temple of God—not the human

temple at Jerusalem but the great Temple above. He received one glimpse of the burning purity before which cherub kneels and seraph bows and angel veils the face. And as he gazed on that everlasting fire the most commonplace fact of human experience broke upon him as a revelation. In the light of God he saw for the first time the dark spot on his own soul. No earthquake, no volcano, no rush of mighty waters ever appalled a man as Isaiah was appalled by the sight of his own heart. It was as if a deformed creature had received the present of a looking-glass and for the first time beheld his misshapeness. In the glass of the Divine glory Isaiah beheld, not only the deformity of himself, but the deformity of the world. His first vision of sin came from a sight of holiness; he got his earliest glimpse of corruption when he gazed into the face of God.

What was this deformity which Isaiah saw in the world and in himself? No man beholds sin in the abstract; it is always a special form of sin. What is that special form of sin which

Isaiah sees? It is human selfishness—the unbrotherhood of man to man. I could bring the whole Book of Isaiah to substantiate this point. From first to last the man is a humanitarian. The keynote of his message is philanthropy. The cry which rises into his ears is the cry of stricken humanity—the cry of the poor and needy, the cry of the sad and weary. The burning coal which touched his lips is the pain of human want, the parching of human thirst, the heat of human toil. He hears God calling him to lash the sins of the nation; but to him all the sins of the nation are forms of a single sin—selfishness. Does he deplore idolatry; it is because the idols of man are images of man's own glory. Does he repudiate extravagance in dress, and luxury in living; it is because this outlay of wealth might have been for the sake of the destitute. Does he vociferate against foreign alliances in the time of danger; it is because to him the evil is not without but within, and can only be cured from within—by cultivating the barren spots in the life of the community. The burden of



Isaiah is the burden of human compassion. It is the desire to right the wrongs which man has done to his brother, to kindle into flower the withered branch, to light the Valley of the Shadow, to bring the sons of darkness under the dome of day.

That was the call of Isaiah—the call to be a humanitarian preacher. We have, I think, a wrong idea of this man. We figure him as a man praying amid a world of atheists. I am convinced that his contemporaries would have put it exactly the other way; they would have said, Here is a lax man in the midst of a godly generation. If you had been living in the days of Isaiah you would have said, This is a freethinker. His whole life was based upon the dictum that charity was better than dogma. His age was an age of dogma. Its dogmas were not articles of faith, but days of observance and rites of worship. A spectator would have said he was less religious than those whom he castigated. *They* were keeping their *Sabbaths*. They were observing their new moons. They were attending their

sacrificial feasts. Isaiah denied the good of none of these things ; but he denied that they were the main things. To him the main things were justice and mercy. He would have said with Coleridge, 'He prayeth best that loveth best.' Isaiah was what in our days would be called an extreme Broad-Churchman. He often preached ; but I doubt if he attended much the preaching of others. I should not be surprised to hear that he was frequently absent from the temple service. I should not be astonished to learn that he often exceeded the allowance of liberty permitted to the Sabbath. The preparation *he* proposed for meeting God was not the attendance at the temple, not the observance of the Sabbath, not the keeping of any feast whatever, but the sympathy of the heart with the wants and woes of man.

Now, in what way did Isaiah propose to inaugurate this sympathy? His initial cry was, 'Get the heart of a little child within you!' It seemed to him that before a man could begin to think of others, he must cease

to think of himself—must become self-unconscious. Isaiah had a great admiration for the nursery; it was to him the type of spiritual regeneration. His idea was that the men who wish to become philanthropists must begin by emptying themselves, by losing consciousness of themselves. He says, If you ever find one who shall bear the burdens of the world upon his shoulders, who shall be a 'prince of peace' to the unresting and a 'wonderful counsellor' to the foolish, you may be sure that this great Saviour has been first of all a childlike soul; your earliest Messianic hope will be the raising of the song, 'Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given!'

The man who attached such importance to the training of the nursery must have been a most domesticated man. I think we have generally had a contrary impression. We have figured him as the reverse of homely. The Isaiah that has floated before our eyes has been commonly a stately form treading the upper circles, walking amid courts and breathing the air of kings. The dignity of his

rhythm has seemed incompatible with a modest sphere; the strength of his denunciations has appeared to imply the voice of one who moved upon the mountains. But look beneath the surface and you will change your view. There will stand before you a new Isaiah, a humble-minded Isaiah, an Isaiah whose heart is in the valley. His very house was in the valley—in the lower part of Jerusalem. Men called the spot 'the Valley of Vision'—perhaps by way of a sneer. The Jewish prophets were never on the social heights; they were against the fashion and therefore out of the fashion. Down in his Valley of Vision Isaiah lived, far from the madding crowd—divorced from public sympathy, almost in social ostracism. But not divorced from family life. No—there the brightness comes in. Isaiah had the joy of wedded happiness. He had a wife whose mind was in tune with his own. She was familiarly called 'the prophetess'—a great compliment to her, and a great testimony to her unity with her husband. And there were two sons born to them—sons who

gave Isaiah his experience of the nursery, sons whose names he has fondly recorded. Was there a vague hope in his heart that one of these might prove to be the Messianic Child—the Child who, when He reached the years of understanding, should become that ministrant Man for whom the world waited?

For, never forget that Isaiah started his spiritual life with the motto, 'Wanted—a ministrant Man.' This was *his* Messianic hope. Others entertained different Messianic hopes. Some dwelt on the thought of a conquering king. Some regaled themselves with the prospect of a protracted feast which should compensate the years of fasting. Some anticipated with rapture an unveiling of the face of God. But Isaiah's heart was fixed on the coming of a ministrant Man. He knew this Man would come, because he knew He was needed. To the prophets of the Jewish race every genuine human want was itself a prediction; it was the shadow of the coming good. Isaiah felt that the world was waiting for a ministrant Man and that the world's

waiting was God's prophecy. When this Messiah would appear, he could not tell. Perhaps at first he hoped that he himself might be the Divinely chosen One. Then, as the sense of his personal inadequacy grew upon him, he may have transferred the hoped-for glory to his firstborn. Then, mayhap, remembering how often God had called to the priesthood the younger son, he may have fixed his expectation on his second child. Doubtless all these dreams had vanished; but the Messianic hope remained, undimmed, unbroken. There was wanted a hiding-place from the wind, there was wanted a covert from the tempest; and because they were wanted they were coming—surely, inevitably. The human need was the Divine promise.

It is significant that the heart of Isaiah sought its refuge from the blast in something human, 'a *man* shall be a hiding-place from the storm and a covert from the tempest.' What has become of his *angel*! It was from an angel that he traced his ordination; it was the vision of an angel that at first inspired

him. Why does he not fall back upon that vision now? He wants to see humanity healed of its wounds; why not summon cherubim and seraphim to be ministering spirits? It is because in him ministration has struck a new note of development. He has made a discovery. He says in effect: 'Hitherto we have looked to the *angels* for the succour of human woes; henceforth *man* shall be the hiding-place of man. Hitherto we have sought a covert from the tempest under an angel's wing; henceforth we shall seek it in the heart of a brother man.' That is what Isaiah meant to say when he spoke of a man as our hiding-place. He was dismissing with a wave of the hand the whole celestial army. He had learned by experience that in the hour of sadness no angelic sympathy will suffice. He had learned by human fatherhood, by the earthly tie of husband, by the response of filial devotion, that nothing but the human can sympathetically help the human. He had learned that the very *height* of an angel was its disqualification to be a ministering spirit

to man—that just by reason of that height it was unable to reach far enough down. And be it observed that the prophet's eyes were on the point *furthest* down. His was not a philanthropy that proposed to descend gradually the slope of the hill. No; he began at the foot. He fixed his eye on the darkest spot, on the most seemingly hopeless spot. He called for a ministrant Man who should go down at once to the nethermost, to the most abandoned, to the 'land of the shadow of death.' He called upon Divine grace to manifest itself in the most unlikely region—among the 'people that walked in darkness'—among the sons of 'Gentile Galilee.' His cry is for a Son of Man who shall seek and save the *lost*, who shall stimulate the barren fig-tree, who shall gather in even those whom the world has cast out, who shall cleanse the lepers for whom earth itself is too pure, who shall waken from the grave humanity's dead.

The truth is, the man Isaiah himself is the finest prophecy of the coming Christ. That ministrant human soul for whom he longed,



was his own ideal of what he *wished* to be. You may measure every man's character by the character of his Messiah; his Messiah is his ideal, his estimate of what to him would constitute riches. If his Christ is a physical conqueror, then his is a physical mind. If his Christ is a criminal judge, then his is a legal mind. If his Christ is a reigning king, then his is a political mind. If his Christ is a seeker of the lost, then his is a philanthropic mind. Why do I call Isaiah a philanthropist? It is because his ideal—his Christ, is a philanthropist, a lover of man, a lover of the unloveliest man. The prophecies of Isaiah are the wishes of Isaiah; and a man's wishes are the measure of him. Not by what a human soul achieves do I determine his watermark. I fix it by what he wants to achieve—*that* is his Messiah and that is his righteousness. I know not what Isaiah actually accomplished. I know not how many souls he saved in Galilee or how many hearts he lifted from the valley of the shadow of death. But I do know that his ideal was a ministrant Man—a Man who

should save unto the uttermost, a Man who should go down to the region of the dead. To image such a Man, to appreciate such a Man, to worship such a Man, was in germ to *be* such a Man; and I impute to the prophet the righteousness he saw in his Lord.

It is by the philanthropy of Isaiah that I explain a phase of his mind which I have always felt to be very peculiar—its strange mixture of severity and tenderness. There have been severe men, and there have been tender men, and there have been men who have revealed one type yesterday and the other to-day. But it is a rare thing to see the two revealed at the same moment. That spectacle appears in Isaiah. He is like one of those days in which we have simultaneous rain and sunshine; and we do not know whether to weep or smile. Nothing can exceed the blast of his anger; it is withering, annihilating. But, even while he denounces, there is a quivering in the voice which speaks volumes on the other side. In one and the same chapter we have the touch of Esau and

the voice of Jacob. It is not that the rainbow comes *after* the flood. The mystery lies in the fact that flood and rainbow exist together, and that the peaks of Ararat never cease to be visible even while the ark tosses on the face of the waters.

But is not this ever the law of redeeming grace. Our anger at the failure of those we love is not proportionate to our sense of their worthlessness but to our sense of their possibilities. We do not castigate those who are without promise. When the teacher sees his pupil making no progress the cloud of his displeasure is just in proportion to his vision of the bow. If he sees no bow, if he believes the pupil to be hopelessly dull, he will not be angry. But if he says to himself, 'This is a lad of parts who might do much better,' it is then he dwells within the cloud of his displeasure. His severity is prompted by his favourable estimate — his sense of unused capacities, his vision of unemployed powers, his conviction that behind the day and the hour there lurks a life worthy to be redeemed.

Now, that is what Isaiah felt towards Judah. For I would direct special attention to the fact that in all his exhortations he professes to be calling her back to her former self. He summons her to no new life of untried capacities; his cry is 'Return!' He feels that she *can* be better because she once *was* better. He points her to no speculative height; he bids her be true to her first traditions. He tells her to resume her original level of humanitarian sympathy. He declares that the spirit of philanthropy was her starting-point, that the dawning of her day was the breath of brotherhood. It is not as a reformer that he preaches the charity of man to man; it is as a conservative. He claims the life of human sympathy as the original life of the nation. He tells his countrymen that if they want to see their true glory they must not look to the future but to the past, 'Thine ear shall hear a voice *behind* thee, saying, This is the way; walk ye in it.' To him the philanthropic age was indeed the age behind him. Had not the service of man been the first motive of the commonwealth!

Was it not this that had stimulated an Abraham! Was it not this that had inspired a Moses! Was it not this that had quickened a Boaz! Was it not this that had given wings to a David and wisdom to a Solomon! Was it not this that lay at the origin even of religious forms! Was not the Sabbath for man's rest, circumcision for man's health, sacrifice for the sanctifying of man's food! No wonder Isaiah's cry is 'Return'! The ministrant Man for whom he had looked had been the Man of his country's morning. The future he beheld for her was the reflex of an idealised past. He believed in her to-morrow because he believed in her yesterday. Her Messianic day was no foreign day. It was her time of revival, her hour of rehabilitation. The Man who was to be her hiding-place from the storm, the Man who was to be her covert from the tempest, was the same who under the shadows of Peniel had wrestled with Jacob until the breaking of the day.

BE mine, O Lord, the vision seen by this old philanthropist—a vision of the ministrant Man! To me, as to him, that is the dress in which Thy Messiah is most beautiful. I have seen Him in many robes. I have seen Him on the banks of Jordan communing with an opened heaven. I have seen Him in Judea's wilderness foiling the tempter's power. I have seen Him at Cana's feast manifesting forth His glory. I have seen Him on the Beatific Mount giving Thy laws to men. I have seen Him in the hour of exaltation transfigured into shining face and glittering garments. But to me He will be dearest in His humblest dress—His hospital dress. Not amid the pearls of the Magi, not amid the songs of Bethlehem, not amid the palm-leaves of Jerusalem, not even amid the splendours of Olivet, am I nearest to Thy Christ. But down in dark Galilee, down in the region of the shadow, down in the valley of the dead—it is *there* I love to meet Him. Where the leper is loathed, where the demoniac is denounced, where the Magdalene is mal-

treated, where the sick are stigmatised—it is *there* I love to meet Him. Where the child is checked in its growth, where the woman is warped in her progress, where the poor are pushed to the wall, where the friendless are forgotten, where the lapsed are left to die, where the tripping are trodden down, where the weak are weeded out by the strong—it is *there* I love to meet Him. There I see the refuge from the storm, there I behold the covert from the tempest. Others may admire Him most in His garb of transfigured glory; but to me His fairest costume is the robe He wore for Calvary.

## CHAPTER XIV

### JEREMIAH THE MELANCHOLY

HAS it ever struck you how few instances the Jewish Gallery presents of a *melancholy* man? Glance at all the portraits we have considered, and you will find no trace of such. Adam is the child in the garden enjoying the fruits and flowers. Abel owes his untimely end to prosperity. Noah makes merry in his old age. Abraham is upheld by high anticipations. Ishmael, despite his desert life, cannot keep down his spirit. Lot is loaded with earth's benefits. Joseph realises his dreams. Moses sees his promised land. I cannot in all our past survey recall one case of an intrinsically sad man—sad by nature, sad by temperament. Even Job is no exception. Job is not melancholy by nature. He is the reverse. His every utterance is an aver-



ment that joy is his birthright—an assertion that the misery he endures is foreign to his character. His friends want him to take the other view—to say that his sufferings are the outcome of his nature. But he vehemently refuses. He declines to admit that sorrow is his natural portion. He insists on regarding it as something abnormal, something incongruous, something unexplained by the constitution of man.

The truth is, the Jew is habitually joyous. The leading article of his creed is the congruity between virtue and happiness. I think his creed is the result of his temperament. The most remarkable thing about him is the unconquerableness of his joy. Whether in his hymns or in his history, the phenomenon is the same; his hope dominates his fear. He is often downcast, but never for long and never absolutely. He never goes down to the *foot* of the pit; he is always pulled up before he reaches it. He often cries bitterly; but it is the cry of a child not accustomed to pain. His spirit keeps him alive in places where others would be dead. He has been found sanguine

in the most sanguinary circumstances. The chords of his harp have struck out joyous strains when the cords of his *heart* might be expected to have been broken. He has had moments of ecstasy in exile, seasons of rapture amid scenes of rapine. The men of this Jewish Gallery have for the most part retained a smiling face.

But we come now to a figure which in our survey is unique—the form of the priest-prophet Jeremiah. For the first time in the Gallery we stand before the portrait of a man constitutionally sad. I do not mean that even he is without hope. But his only hope is in a new creation—a new covenant between God and man. The two figures which in thought I have always placed beside one another are Jeremiah and Job. But in doing so I do not know whether I am more influenced by their resemblance or by their contrast. For there is a great *unlikeness* amid their likeness. Both give unstinted expression to their pain; but there the similarity ends and the difference begins. To Jeremiah and to Job the pain may be equal in amount,

but it is very different in quality. To Job it was something which interfered with the rights of man; to Jeremiah it was man's rightful inheritance. To Job it was a thing abnormal; to Jeremiah it was the only result compatible with a sinful state. To Job it was an element to be resisted; to Jeremiah it was a fate to be accepted and acquiesced in. Job fretted against it as a blot on the universe; Jeremiah looked upon it as the only possible means by which the existing blot on the universe might eventually be removed.

Jeremiah, then, is a unique figure in the Gallery. He is a man who finds sorrow his atmosphere, his home—a man who feels it more natural to lament than to rejoice. He is perfectly conscious of this uniqueness; 'Behold and see,' he says, 'if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow!' It is not often that a man confesses himself to be peculiar. Specially in the sphere of affliction are we eager to find either precedents or accompaniments. If we have a particular ailment it comforts us to know that our case is not

abnormal; we start in search of kindred experiences. But this man feels his case to be, in Jewish annals, without analogy. Amid all his contemporaries, amid all his ancestors, he sees no parallel. He realises the eccentricity of his own position, and, with its eccentricity, its solitude. He feels himself to be alone in the circles of the present, alone in the gallery of the past. He claims to represent a fresh type of man, a phase of human nature new to the portraiture of ancient Israel—the man who accepts pain as a birthright, the man who deems it his *duty* to be sad.

What is the ground of this sorrow of Jeremiah? That is the main question which invites our interest. I will begin by answering it negatively; I will consider what was not its ground. And first, I would remark that the sadness of Jeremiah did not result from his vision of God's impending judgments. That these judgments were impending is a historic fact; that Jeremiah did behold them is a literary certainty. The air was full of them and his books are full of them. Nebuchad-

nezzar was at the gates of Jerusalem ; all the might of Babylon was gathered against her. Her own power was at the lowest. Her glory had departed. Her kings had become mere puppets. Her priests had grown corrupt. Her prophets were birds without song. Her people were steeped in iniquity. She had no spiritual weapons to resist Babylon—faith was faint, devotion was dead ; the foreigner was sure to win. All this is true, incontrovertibly true. And yet, this is not Jeremiah's grief. However much he laments the sin of the people, he does not lament the judgment of God. He glories in it. He *welcomes* the approaching victory of Babylon. He accepts Nebuchadnezzar as God's servant. He is eager that his countrymen should submit themselves to the yoke of the stranger. He calls upon them to yield to the impending storm, to cast themselves, Jonah-like, into the sea, and to accept their penalty as a messenger from heaven. He courts chastisement, he invites retribution, he hails as an ally the day of punishment.

Can we account for this? I think we can.

You have only to figure Jeremiah as under the influence of conscience, and all is clear. Jeremiah here reveals, not in his prophecy but in himself, one of the deepest laws of conscience. The popular opinion is that a conscience-stricken man is eager to avert punishment. He is not. He is eager to get rid of his present pain, he is eager to remedy his deed of wrong; but he does not wish to avert punishment. He looks to the bearing of his penalty as the only possible source of relief, and he would rather accelerate than delay it. George Mac Donald, in one of his novels, makes a boy come to the keeper of an orchard and say, 'I stole apples; beat me!' Jeremiah has the same feeling as this boy in the orchard. He identifies himself with his country; he has elected to share her fate whatever it may be. But he feels that if she is penitent she ought to wish for a penalty. She has robbed the Lord's orchard; she should accept the Lord's chastening. She should voluntarily go to receive the weight of His impending hand. Instead of hiding herself

among the trees of the garden, hers should be the open cry, 'I stole apples; beat me!'

Jeremiah's sadness, then, was not the result of beholding God's impending judgments on his native land—this is the first of the negative answers as to the cause of his melancholy. But I would remark, secondly, that his melancholy did not result from his personal calamities. His life, indeed, was full of such calamities. Few human experiences have been so environed with cloud and storm. He had forty-two years of active service, and they were years of trouble. From beginning to end he was a mark for obloquy. The people disliked him; his brother priests hated him; his brother prophets scorned him. He was always under suspicion; he was often in custody; he was sometimes in danger of death. In his last years he was driven into exile—banished to the land of Egypt. He had desired his exile to be in *Babylon*, because he felt exile in Babylon to be *God's* penalty. To be banished by God is one thing, to be banished by man is another; an idea may

transform a circumstance. Tell a man that his Patmos is God's revelation to him, and he may well bear it; but if Patmos shuts the *door* of revelation it can be nothing but a thorn. Jeremiah's life was sown among thorns; it was a series of tribulations. And yet, these are not the cause of his melancholy. They are the effect of his melancholy. So far from being the ground of his sadness, they came to him on account of his sadness. Why did men hate him and persecute him? Just because he was a lugubrious man. He wept amid their fancied triumphs. He mourned amid their pageants. He wrung his hands when they shouted. He pulled down his flag when theirs went up. He sang dirges when they chanted the national anthem. The sorrows which they heaped upon him were sorrows heaped upon an already melancholy man, and heaped upon him by reason of that melancholy.

There is a third thing to which the sadness of Jeremiah cannot be attributed, and that is, any special sense of personal sin. There are different experiences in the spiritual world as



there are different experiences in the temporal world. There are men whose souls are nursed in spiritual storm; they enter the kingdom with violence, they come to the crown through the cross. There are others who have just the opposite experience. They cannot point to any time when they were conscious of a crisis, a change, a revolution in their mode of thinking. Life has for them been one uniform calm. They have received their illumination, not as Paul—in a lightning flash from heaven, but as Nathanael—through the branches of a fig-tree. Now, Jeremiah is one of this latter kind. He seems to have been born in the very air of heaven, to have breathed it without interruption, to have assimilated it without impurities. He says himself that his call came to him when yet a child. Any timidity he experiences is solely on the ground of youth; he has no sense of inward struggle. I cannot but contrast his call with the call of Isaiah. Isaiah's vision of God was an awful thing. It came to him as something which burned, which threatened to destroy. It came

as an interruption of life's routine, as an arrest of the natural day; it brought the sense of human nothingness. But Jeremiah's spirit was a sheltered lake. There was loud noise on either bank, there was fierce tumult all along the enclosing land; but the lake itself was smooth, placid, unruffled. His was not a tossing of the spirit. He had neither a doubt nor a fear of God's dealings. He had no uncertainty of his own rectitude. His heart was at peace with heaven.

I have now considered the ground of Jeremiah's sadness negatively, that is to say, I have considered what is not its ground. We pass next to its positive aspect, what did constitute the cause of his suffering. Now, there is one thing clear on the surface. In looking for the secret of Jeremiah's grief we are limited to a single sphere of selection—the mental sphere. It came from a cause invisible to the bystander. The prophet declares in so many words that those who looked upon him did so without compassion, 'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by!' The picture

conveyed in these words is that of a man alone amidst a crowd. On the one hand there is no outward solitude; the people are gathered there. Jeremiah is not in a desert; he is in a populous street. The multitude throng him, press him, jostle him as they pass by. But, on the other hand, they *do* pass by—they have no touch for his *soul*. His lamentations are incomprehensible to them. They wonder why he weeps. They see no cause for tears. No obloquy has yet arisen. No dungeon has yet opened. No outward sword has yet been pointed at his breast. What has the man to complain of? There is nothing which can be seen, nothing which can be weighed, nothing which can be measured. Can anything hurt which cannot be seen or weighed or measured? Can there be a wound where there is no weapon, a bending without a burden, a pain which cannot be painted?

And the answer must be, Yes. That is exactly the description of the thing called mental pain—a heaviness caused by something imponderable. And here I want to direct

attention to a curious fact—the prominence given to mental pain in the Bible Gallery. However little it was appreciated by the crass multitude, it has the special appreciation of the sacred artist. I have said that the men of the Gallery are by nature men of joy ; but we are all at times sad from circumstance. And what I say is that the circumstances which break the natural joy of the Bible heroes are oftener mental than material. The sorrows of Noah come not from the flood. The trial of Abraham issues from his own soul. The griefs of Moses are of the spirit. The damps that dim the fires of Elijah are all from within. Job remains undaunted by poverty, by bereavement, by sickness ; but his patience is made at last to tremble by the suggestion of an abstract thought. Why did the Jew shrink from suffering physical pain ? Mainly because he deemed it non-physical. It was an *idea* that made him shrink. He feared earthly suffering, not for what it was, but for what it seemed to signify. He feared it because its coming meant to him an absent God, a displeased Divinity, an

offended Heaven. The pains of the Jew are chiefly mental pains. He dreads the shadow, not so much for what it brings as for what it eclipses—not so much because it darkens the face of his world as because it hides the face of his God.

Jeremiah, then, was a mental sufferer—his affliction came from within. What was the nature of this mental suffering? The pain of the mind may have as many different sources as the pain of the body. Every feeling of the heart has its own special pain—pride, humility, anger, envy, love. What is Jeremiah's source of mental unrest? It came from the keenness of his intellectual sympathy. Intellectual sympathy is the power to put yourself in the place of another—to feel another's experience as if it were your own. Men possess the power in vastly varying degrees. In some it seems almost absent—there are those who say, 'Am I my brother's keeper!' In others it is so strong that it appears to absorb the personal life—to leave no room for the individual wants. It reaches its climax in the Son of Man, in

whom the identity between the sufferer and the spectator is so pronounced that He can say of the calamities of life, 'Inasmuch as they did it unto the least of my brethren, they have done it unto Me.'

Into whose place does *Jeremiah* put himself? That is the final question, the crucial question. And the answer is beyond measure a startling one—he puts himself in the place of God. He tries to imagine what he himself would feel if he were God Almighty beholding the state of His creatures. He says to himself, 'If I were the Divine Being seated upon the throne of the universe and looking upon the ruin of the land I had loved so well, what would my feeling at this moment be?' He says it would be the feeling of a loving husband towards an unfaithful wife. He pours forth the love-song of a wounded heart, but he conceives it as sung by the Almighty. It is God's song he sings—not his own. He loses sight of his own personality. His heart breaks with the Divine burden, his spirit groans with the Divine grief. It is the most remarkable vicarious sorrow I

know in the whole course of the Old Testament. Isaiah's was a vicarious sorrow; he, too, put himself in the place of another. But Isaiah put himself in the place of the people; his was, after all, the sympathy of the human with the human. Jeremiah put himself in the place of God; his was the sympathy of the human with the Divine. A phase of mind so striking demands a moment's consideration.

We are again and again exhorted to pity the sorrows of those beneath us, in other words, to imagine ourselves encompassed by the privations of an inferior condition. But conceive the exhortation given, 'Pity the sorrows of *God*; try to sympathise with the cares incidental to a Divine Being!' Should we not feel the mandate to be the wildest of paradoxes. We never think of sympathy as *ascending*. We think of it as going down, as going round, but not as going up. To pity that which is above us is a novel thing; it seems almost a contradiction in terms. Yet this is the gospel of Jeremiah, nay, this is the gospel of a greater than Jeremiah. What means the

solicitation to take up the Cross of Christ? What means the exhortation to participate in the sacrifice of Calvary? What means the invitation to have communion with the body and blood of the 'Man from heaven'? Is it not simply the call to lend your human pity to the sorrows of the Divine Life—to enter sympathetically within the gates of its Gethsemane? Divested of all forms, what else than this is meant by the fellowship with Christ's sufferings? The key-note of Christianity is sympathy with God, solicitude for God, anxiety for God. Why does the prayer which teaches to pray make me begin with the *Divine* wants? Why does it tell me, before asking for my daily bread or even for my pardon, to say, 'Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven'? It is because Christian sympathy is, before all things, sympathy with God, because the deepest shadow which presses upon the soul of a follower of Christ is a vision of the cloud which seeks to dim His glory.

Now, Jeremiah comes very near to this New



Testament picture. It is to him we owe the very phrase 'New Testament'; he was the first who ever used it. He was before his time. Posterity felt this—felt that he should have belonged to a later age. It is to this that I attribute the legend of after days that he rose from the dead. Men came to realise that his own age was unripe for him, and they tried to bring him further down the stream. I do not wonder. He is to my mind the most modern of the ancients. He is closer to the Cross of Christ than any pre-Christian man I know. In a more direct sense than Isaiah he is entitled to the name which Isaiah bears—'the Evangelical Prophet.' Isaiah has more Messianic vision, but Jeremiah has more Messianic feeling. Isaiah is a humanitarian—he wants a Christ for the sake of man; Jeremiah is a mystic—he wants a Christ for the sake of God. Isaiah seeks to cleanse the earthly temple; Jeremiah desires to gladden the heavenly courts. Isaiah looks at the sorrows of *men* and longs for a deliverer; Jeremiah contemplates the sorrows of the All-Father and longs for a comforter.

Isaiah views the work of the Christ as a source of peace to the struggling human heart; Jeremiah views the work of the Christ as a source of joy to the Divine Spirit. The prayer of Isaiah is the Lord's Prayer, but it is the second half—'Give us our daily bread,' 'Forgive us our debts,' 'Lead us not into temptation.' The prayer of Jeremiah is the earlier trio—'Hallowed be Thy name,' 'Thy kingdom come,' 'Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.'

**B**E this my opening prayer, O Father—the prayer for *Thee*! Let me put Thy wants first, foremost! Ere I remember my daily bread, let me remember Thy Divine beauty! Ere I ask for my pardon, let me pray for Thy prosperity! Ere I beseech Thee for my guidance, let me wish Thee to be glorified! Hitherto, I have given all my sympathy to the wants of my brother; let me remember the wants of my Father! I have heard men say, 'God is sufficient unto Himself.' Nay, my

Father—for Thy name is Love. Love *cannot* be sufficient unto itself; the larger it is, the less self-sufficing it must be. Teach me the sorrows of an infinite love in a loveless world! Help me to understand Thy cry for communion! Let me feel the solitude of being Divine when there is no heart to share the Divineness! Let me enter into the *pain* of my Lord—the pain of unrequited love! Let me break Thy loneliness with the touch of a kindred hand! Often have I said ‘Thy kingdom come’ for my own sake; let me say it for Thine! Often have I prayed ‘Thy will be done’ to bring my peace; let me pray it to bring Thine! Thy heart is not at rest when other hearts are hardened; Thy Spirit is on the *waters* when other wills are wayward. I understand Jeremiah’s sorrow. I understand his pity for Thy lonely perfectness, Thy solitary greatness, Thine unshared purity. I understand his sadness for the single star of Bethlehem—alone in a boundless sky. I understand his tears over Thy heart without a home, Thy love without a lodgment, Thy

revealing without response, Thine appeals  
without answer, Thy calls without communion,  
Thy cares without companionship, Thy work  
without watchers, Thy voice without vibration  
in a human soul. In my prayers, O God, let  
me remember *Thee*!

## CHAPTER XV

### EZEKIEL THE INDIVIDUALIST

THERE are three figures in the Great Gallery which I am disposed to set apart from the rest, and to designate 'The Three Sympathies.' Each of them expresses a different phase of sympathetic feeling, and becomes, to future times, the representative of that phase. These three figures are Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel—the two portraits immediately preceding and the portrait at which we have now arrived. Isaiah represents sympathy with the masses; he has taken up into his heart the sorrows of the *Galilees* of life. Jeremiah represents sympathy with God; he has entered into the secret place of the Divine Pavilion and shared the burdens of the Divine Spirit. But Ezekiel is to give us an experience different from either of these—that of a man in sympathy

with the individual soul. The two preceding prophets were birds of expansive wing; they soared over vast spaces. Vastness, indeed, is their characteristic. Jeremiah has put himself sympathetically in the place of the Almighty, has tried to figure in words the experience of the All-Father. Isaiah has put himself sympathetically in the place of the multitude, has considered the sorrows and sins of the nation as a whole. But there is an element different from either of these. These are seen by the telescope; there is an element which requires the microscope. What of the individual man viewed *apart* from the masses? What of the man viewed, not as an item of the census, but as a living, breathing, separate human soul? That is the question which Isaiah, which Jeremiah, has left unanswered and whose answer is to come from other lips. It is reserved for the lips of Ezekiel. Ezekiel is distinctively the prophet for the individual—the prophet who looks through the microscope. Isaiah soars to the heights of the world; Jeremiah compasses the

breadth of the world ; but Ezekiel takes notice of the world's little things.

And let me say in passing that the care for the individual is not a *primitive* stage of culture. It is a late development of the art of every gallery. The progress of the human race is not a march from the individual to the masses ; it is a march from the masses to the individual. Man does not begin by realising himself as a separate unit. He gets his earliest vision of himself as the member of a clan. At the outset, one man was very like another. Humanity had no individual movements ; it moved in masses at the impulse of a chieftain's will. Variation comes with development, and deepens with each stage of development. The individual man is always at the top of the hill. I do not mean that he *reaches* the top of the hill ; he is born there. He never sees the light until humanity is at the summit. Life is a tapering process ; it is broad at the base and narrow at the top. Its latest fruit is a self-reflecting soul—a soul recognising its separateness from all other souls and, by the

very sense of its individual isolation, arriving at the conviction of a personal responsibility.

I have called Ezekiel the prophet for the individual life. How did he become so? By an event which at the time was interpreted as a cloud on the Divine government. I have no hesitation in saying that the special providence in Ezekiel's history was one of those incidents which seem to deny the *existence* of a Providence. The point is so striking in its bearing on the mission of Ezekiel, and so suggestive of the possibility of lights in similar clouds, that it may not be wholly profitless to spend a few moments in its elucidation.

And first of all, I wish to state that in my opinion every original circumstance of Ezekiel's life was *against* his becoming the prophet of the individual soul. The very things which are popularly thought to have prepared him for his mission were really adverse to his preparation. That he was the son of a priest and himself trained to the priest's office, that



he could boast a long line of clerical ancestors, that he was born and bred in an age of religious revivalism, that his youth was passed amid a rejuvenescence of the national hope—all this is true. But it is just on this account that Ezekiel had special disadvantages for speaking to the individual man. To the Jew of that age the priest was a cabinet-minister, and the revival of religion meant the revival of political dreams. The hope that had burst into rejuvenescence was not the hope of immortality for the man, but the hope of immortality for the nation. Nothing could be more unfavourable to the individual man of that day than the roseate expectation of national glory. What did it mean but this, that the unit was to sink himself, bury himself, annihilate himself for the common good, without possibility of personal reaping and without prospect of sharing in the harvest hour. It said to the Jew: 'Have no private life. Live for your country. Live in the life of the empire. Abandon all thought of the personal. Merge your own destiny in the destiny of the nation.

Pray for no immortality but the immortality of your native land.'

It was such a blast of imperialism that fell on the early years of Ezekiel. He grew up in an atmosphere where the public life took precedence of the private life, where the man was lost in the crowd. The religious revival was a revival of war fever. It was an appeal, not to the God of conscience but to the God of battles. It was an attempt to awaken, not souls, but masses. It was a dream of restoring the palmy political days—the days of David, the days of Solomon. Before the eyes of long-repressed Judah there flashed again the prospect of imperial power. In a burst of theocratic fanaticism she threw herself into the strife of nations. She sent forth her little army to arrest the march of the Egyptian Pharaoh-Necho. Her king Josiah led the way—Josiah the loved, the pious, the God-anointed. She saw in him a second David; her heart burned with the anticipated glory. The young Ezekiel beheld his country go forth in battle array; and all around him

rang the great refrain, 'The days of our David have returned!'

Suddenly there is a crash, a series of crashes. In swift dramatic sequence come the acts of a dreadful tragedy. On the bloody field of Megiddo Josiah falls, Judah falls. The flowers of the forest have withered; the pride of Zion is slain. Pharaoh-Necho plants his foot upon the vanquished soil; he is about to take possession. But ere he can grasp the fruit, another claims the tree. Nebuchadnezzar comes—with all the power of Babylon behind him. The rival claimants fight, and Nebuchadnezzar wins. Judah lies prostrate at the feet of the Babylonian. He grants her a nominal king—a king who shall be his vassal and his tributary. The puppet king rebels. Then Nebuchadnezzar says, 'This people shall rebel no more; I will transport them gradually into my own country.' He begins by transporting the élite, because the best men are the most dangerous men. Ten thousand of the strongest are drafted into Babylon and set to work on the

banks of the Chebar. Among them is young Ezekiel.

What a cruel providence! you say—to arrest this young man's missionary career on the very threshold! Was it not a bad training in the knowledge of God to see piety rewarded with Divine contempt? The men around were asking—perhaps Ezekiel himself was asking—why should good King Josiah have been treated like bad King Ahab? Why should his hopes of national reform have been recompensed by the dismemberment of the nation altogether? Why should his zeal for the glory of God have met with so unkind a response as the dissolution of his kingdom and the banishment of his people?

I answer, this dark cloud was a disguised mercy; it enclosed one of the brightest episodes in the annals of the Great Gallery. For the first time in the history of Judaism God was about to speak to each individual man—to address, not the nation, but its inhabitants one by one. Was it not well that He should speak to them in a foreign land!

Up to this time the private individual had not appropriated the words of God; he had said, 'They are not meant for me; they are intended for the nation.' God said, 'I will *sweep away* the nation, and then each private soul will know that I speak to *him*.' If God's voice was to be heard by the private soul, was it not well that the people should first be banished from their own land! Had not their own land been their barrier to private communion! They had thought of their God as too political to be personal, too zealous for the *mass* to be careful for the *man*. Their very sense of loyalty had obscured the rights of the individual soul. Therefore God broke their tie of loyalty. He removed them from their country, from their army, from their temple, from their king. He reduced them to units. He made each man pass in single file before the judgment-seat—dissociated from an empire, dissevered from a clan, alone with his own heart. The exile was a golden exile—an ushering of the soul into the immediate presence of God.

And the man who was to carry the message to the private soul was Ezekiel. The dark cloud was his special providence ; it dispelled his adverse surroundings ; it made his mission possible. Not that I think even Ezekiel, at first, saw this. I believe that for some time the captive youth walked rather by faith than by sight. Separated from home, friends, kindred, and hopes of worldly promotion, he had much outward cause for sorrow. The wonder is that he did not sink. What saved him from sinking? What kept him above the waves till he caught the rope of his destiny? Have we any clue which can guide us to an answer? I think we have. Little as we know about Ezekiel's life, the book which bears his name gives us one point of information which is quite unique and which is worth a whole biography ; it tells us what sort of characters he took for his model. If I want to know how a man will bear adversity, I would rather study his models than anything else about him. Tell me what he admires, tell me who are his ideals of heroism,

and I will tell you how he will take misfortune. If his ideal is Napoleon, he will succumb; if his typical hero is Francis of Assisi, he will cling to the last plank. You may judge a man by his favourite model either in fact or fiction; for, that which we admire we aspire to, and that which we eulogise we seek to emulate.

Now, Ezekiel's style of hero is an open secret. He has revealed to us the three biographical names that he loves the best—Noah, Job, Daniel. And these three are one. Vastly different in their environment, they represent the same type of character. They were a strangely selected trio. Noah was a man of history. Job was a memory of tradition. Daniel was a living contemporary—still very young, as yet only rising into fame, but beckoning by his example his fellow exiles on. What was the point common to these three? Was it not this—that, in different ways, they had all lost their world. Noah had seen the fashion of his age pass away, and had stood amid the wreck of former

things. Job had seen the glories of life perish, and had dwelt amid the ashes of the past. Daniel had been transplanted from Judah into Babylon, and had become a stranger in a strange land. Yet none of these had fainted. Noah had inaugurated his new world with a feast. Job had ended by seeing God in the whirlwind. Daniel had learned the language of that country in which he was an exile. They breathed the one refrain, 'Suffer, and be strong!'

Armed with these three ideals—which I think came to his mind successively, not simultaneously—Ezekiel passed through the stages of youth and kept his faith alive. He dwelt in the little colony of Tel-Abib in Chaldea, on the banks of the river Chebar. Doubtless he supported himself by the work of his hands. He possessed that determination of will which can secure success in any sphere. Success he certainly had. We find him in the course of time established there in a house of his own and united to one whom he devotedly loved—so devotedly that



he calls her the desire of his eyes. Spite of his exile, life glided smoothly; his hand prospered in labour, his heart flowered with domestic bliss. So, the hours of morning passed and the hour of noonday came. He reached his thirtieth year. And then there happened something—something which no historian could see, something which no painter could discover, something which belongs exclusively to the life of the spirit, but which changed the course of Ezekiel for evermore.

One day, as he strayed by the river-side, he had what he calls a vision—what would now be called a spiritual experience. He had walked by that river-side every day for the last fifteen years, and he had seen no vision there. Why should the waters of the Chebar tell him something to-day which they did not tell him yesterday! But, is Ezekiel alone in that experience! Is it not a universal law—a law of all life! Are there not seasons when the things around us acquire a sacramental value to individual minds! There

have been moments when the bush which you have always thought a most commonplace object has burned with heavenly fire. There have been times in which you have said of a heap of stones, 'This is none other than the house of God.' There have been seasons when a Bible text has struck us with quite unique significance and reverberated with a fresh meaning. Like Miss Proctor's lost chord, it may convey a note which was not there yesterday and which may not be there to-morrow. It may convey a note which I hear, and you do not. Doubtless there were men besides Ezekiel on the banks of the Chebar that day; but these saw only a sheet of water and heard only a murmuring sound. To Ezekiel the sheet of water was a crystal mirror revealing the kingdom of God, and the murmuring sound was the voice of the Divine Spirit. It spoke to Ezekiel as if he were the only human being in the world; it addressed him as 'son of man.' It separated him from the crowd in the midst of his secular work, in the midst of the garish day. The

waters of Chebar were visible, audible, to the whole multitude—and to them the sacrament would doubtless come *some* day. But, for this hour, the waters were a sacrament to Ezekiel alone; through the element most familiar to daily sight *he* was listening in solitude to the voice of God.

And what did that voice say—or rather, that beginning of many voices? What was the message which, that day and all the after days, greeted him by the river-side? Let me try to paraphrase it. It said: Ezekiel, your people have an exaggerated sense of the power of heredity. They are making the sins of their fathers an excuse for their own. They are claiming their iniquities as an inevitable inheritance; they are trying to throw their responsibility upon the long line of their ancestors. Go and tell them they are mistaken! Tell them there is a force in this world *besides* hereditary force—the force of the individual soul! Tell them there is a power in the personal will which can modify the will of the ages! Proclaim to each man

that he is *not* bound to yield to the current of the stream! Bid him remember that he can resist the current! Reveal to him the secret of his own personality—its secret and its awfulness! Tell him to practise inflexibility, to practise resistance to the waters! Bid him cultivate determination, resolution, unwaveringness of purpose! Teach him to train his will as he would train his eye! Exhort him to withstand by daily exercise the pressure of that ancestral stream of passion which has widened into a river and is deepening into a sea!

That is the message to Ezekiel. I could imagine no more trenchant message for our own day. We are very much in the position of Ezekiel's countrymen. We have invested heredity with an absolute power. We are in danger of forgetting our responsibility. We want an Ezekiel—some preacher to tell us, not of the race, but of the individual. We want something to strengthen, not the nation, but the unit. Anything that gives force to the individual man will be our Ezekiel, and ought

to be welcomed as such. Is it not just on this ground that the educators of our day have smiled upon athletics. Is it not because to this century the most needed of all influences is the power of an inflexible will—a will that can resist an adverse environment and cleave its way through surrounding obstacles. Our age needs the sense of personal power. It has a sense of political power, a sense of military power, a sense of imperial power; but these are powers of the community. What of the boy, the youth, the man? What of the soul in its silent hours, in its secret moments? Is there to be no training for personal force, no regimen for the individual will, no discipline to harden the mental fibres, no school to teach endurance to the oppressed spirit?

It is a singular circumstance that the one glimpse we have of Ezekiel's domestic life reveals him in this school of self-discipline. It is one of the most touching pieces of autobiography ever given to the world; and it is given in four verses. He tells us that one morning the wife who was the desire of his

eyes was suddenly smitten with a deadly illness; she died that night. We see him standing in the chamber of death with 'night' in his soul. To-morrow he was to have spoken to the people; to-morrow he was to have preached on the banks of the Chebar to the individual hearts of men. Surely none will expect him to fulfil the engagement! Surely all will see that the pressure of the flesh is too strong for the will of the spirit! But is not that the very doctrine he has been called to decry! Is not that the very sentiment he has been commissioned to repudiate! Shall he, the preacher, unsay his own teaching! Shall he, whom God has sent to proclaim the personal rights of duty over the influence of passion, be the first in his own practice to nullify the message! No; he will not yield his principle to his pain. To-morrow he will be there—on the banks of the Chebar with the thirsting crowd. To-morrow he will be there—there with a broken heart but an unbroken purpose, with weary step but unwearied resolve. To-morrow he will be there—to tell

in earthly sadness the good tidings of heavenly joy, to preach a personal peace which the world cannot take away.

And he *was* there ; and there we will leave him. On no nobler spot could the curtain of his life fall. The Bible never records the *death* of its prophets. Isaiah may have been sawn asunder, Jeremiah may have been stoned, Ezekiel may have died in bed ; but these events have no record in the Bible. In the thought of the spectator the Bible prophet is *never* to die. He has a message which is timeless, and his image is to be timeless. Men who work for their day and generation receive a memorial stone to mark their boundary-line. We see Abraham's Cave of Machpelah. We hear Jacob and Joseph pronounce their last blessing. We get a glimpse even of the dying face of Moses. These are men of all time ; yet they are temporal men ; they have a secular work to do, and it ought to be dated. But the prophets are timeless. They deal with the things of eternity—things which never grow old, things which are the same yesterday and to-day and

forever. We must not think of them as dying, as dead. We must not dig for them a grave or carve for them an inscription. We must see them ever before us. We must think of them as abiding, permanent. We must view them as unchanging with the changing of the years. We must receive their message, not as a voice from the past, but as a revelation from the hour. We must hear Ezekiel still speaking on the banks of Chebar, still exhorting to personal purity—crying to the men of England as he cried to the men of Judah, ‘Forget not the value of your individual souls!’

**M**EET me alone, O Lord, meet me alone! Let me feel, for one moment, the awful dignity of my own soul! I am not so much afraid of Thy judgment-day as of the general assize which men have figured there. I fear lest my sight of the crowd may dim the sight of my own importance. I have heard men say that my danger lies in my pride. No; it lies in my humility. I have not



realised the possibilities of my own soul. I have viewed myself as a *fragment* of the race, as a *drop* of the stream. I have thought myself a rag driven by the wind—impelled by a force behind me. In the hour of my vices I have said, 'These have come from my fathers.' I have sheltered myself under my own nothingness. I have blamed the past ages for my sin. I have hid myself from Thee among the lives of my ancestors; I have called myself the victim of heredity; I have crouched behind the multitude. Bring me out from the covert of the fig-leaves! Let me hear Thy voice in the garden speaking to *me*—to me alone! Is it not written, 'When they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples'? Was it not when the spectators had all *gone out* that Thou didst speak to her who was a sinner? So let it be with me! Send the multitude away—the multitude of my ancestors! Meet me on my own threshold! Meet me when the sun has gone down, when the crowd has melted, when the pulse of the city beats low! Meet me in the stillness of

my own heart, in the quiet of my own room,  
in the silence of my own reflective hour!  
Reveal to me my greatness! Flash Thy light  
upon the treasures hid in my field! Show me  
the diamond in my dust! Bring me the pearl  
from my sea! Tell me the stars in my sky!  
Read me the charter of my human freedom!  
When Thou hast magnified my soul I shall  
learn my need of *Thee*!

## CHAPTER XVI

### DANIEL THE DARING

AMONG the ten thousand whom Nebuchadnezzar carried into Babylon were two young men who have reached distinction—Ezekiel and Daniel. They were companions in exile, but they were not exactly companions in destiny. Both, as I have said, have reached distinction; but they have not both reached it in the same way; Ezekiel climbed to it, Daniel soared to it. The qualities of the men were different. Ezekiel was less fitted to catch at once the popular eye. It is not that Daniel was more showy. We are told in the parable that there are seeds which spring up quickly because they have not much deepness of earth. But there are causes of rapid growth other than superficiality. Two minds may be equally solid and their work equally durable, and yet the one

may come to light much sooner than the other. The sphere of the one may be mental and the sphere of the other physical. Work in the region of abstract thought reaches the eye much quicker than work in the region of material fact. And that is the difference between Ezekiel and Daniel. Both were faithful labourers—labourers without tinsel and without meretricious ornament. But the labour of Ezekiel was within; the labour of Daniel was without. Ezekiel revealed thoughts; Daniel foretold events. Ezekiel laid bare the state of hearts; Daniel laid bare the state of empires. Ezekiel lifted the veil from life; Daniel lifted the veil from history. The result was that in public estimation Daniel was far up the hill ere Ezekiel's ascent had even begun. Daniel's course was meteoric, because, in addition to being the man of God he was the man suited to the hour.

The figure of Daniel has received more close scrutiny than any form in the Gallery. Yet I think he has been studied precisely in those points in which he is not representative. Men

have inquired as to the date of the picture, the painter of the picture, the antiquity of the inscription on the picture. These are very interesting questions, but they are not representative questions; they do not touch the heart of the matter. They are of interest to students of Eastern history, but they contribute nothing to the study of man as man. The crucial thing about Daniel, from an artistic point of view, is the universality of his appeal. What is that in him which appeals to all? The powers of the magician? No. The vision of the future? No. The service to his exiled people? No. The authenticity of the relics which surround his person? No. The one universal feature of the portrait is its answer to the question, What is the quality most needed by a young man? The Book of Daniel I regard as beyond all things the young man's guide-book—the only book which has deliberately pointed out the quality which is essential to the formation of character. It has set itself to solve the problem, What is the secret of manliness? And the solution is so

original, so unconventional, and so confirmed by modern experience, that we may well pause to study this phase of the picture.

If a plebiscite were proposed containing answers to the query, What is the ultimate requirement for a man's success in secular life? it is doubtful if any one would give the reply of the Book of Daniel. Some would say, intellect; some, prudence; some, sobriety; some, piety. This book admits the need of all these; but it says that there must be something *behind* all of them. It says there is a quality without which every one of these qualities must be neutralised. What is it? It is courage—the spirit of daring. We do not commonly associate this with a prosaic thing like good-conduct; we think of it rather as belonging to the naughty paths of romance. But the Book of Daniel puts it in the daily walk. The peculiarity of this man's courage is that from beginning to end it was laid in an unpoetic scene. It never had any stimulus from without—not even in the lions' den. It was hailed by no spectators, cheered by no

plaudits, accompanied by no bands of music. No eye looked on but the eye of conscience, no voice said 'Well done!' but the voice of duty. His was no tournament, no visible battle-field, no audible debate where the hearers clap their hands. It was a field without spectators, a debate without auditors, a combat whose fierceness and intensity were felt by himself alone.

I recognise three stages in the courage of Daniel. I would call them respectively the trial of the flesh, the trial of the mind, and the trial of the spirit. As these occur in chronological order, they may be taken to mark the epochs in Daniel's development—as, indeed, they mark the crucial seasons in the development of every youth. Let us glance at them, one by one.

I The first scene is the trial of the flesh. The curtain rises in Babylon. We see Daniel moving already in the higher circles—a popular young man whose company is much in request. He dines at the tables of the rich in a city where the tables of the rich were groaning with

luxuries and when it was the fashion to be dissipated. But Daniel pursues an unwonted policy. He joins the guests without joining in their revelry. He puts a rein upon himself. He avoids all excesses; he comes out from the banquet as sober as he went in. Now, let us understand where his trial lay. It was not that he had to resist the temptation of physical appetite; it was that he had to resist the temptation of being a man 'up-to-date.' What he required was not self-restraint; it was courage. The temptation to intemperance was not that intemperance was pleasant, but that it was 'good form.' It was this which made resistance to it a courageous thing. So far as the wine-cup is merely a pleasure, it may be resisted *without* courage. Nay, in this respect, a man's greatest safety may be his cowardice—his fear for his own health. But where the use of the wine-cup is 'good form,' the case is very different. What is needed then is a brave heart, and no substitute will suffice. It requires a daring man to say, 'I decline to be in the fashion; I elect to



stand alone.' To say that, is at once to put yourself in a den of lions; and in this case the mouths of the lions are *not* shut. Daniel, from the very outset, was on his own line—the line of the greatest resistance, the line where he had no choice but to dare. His courage is never more conspicuous than in his festive hour.

For remember, Babylon sanctified physical excesses—made them 'good form.' Excess in the outward was her characteristic; she was like Rome in the days of the empire. Paul, in speaking of that empire, exhorted his converts, 'Be not conformed to this world!'—to that which is reckoned the law of etiquette. He would have applied the same words to the dweller in Babylon. Babylon, like Rome, put a social imprimatur upon her practices; to refuse conformity was to incur ostracism. It is this exposure to ostracism which makes it incumbent on every Daniel to be, before all things, a soldier. Provincial vices can be cured by an appeal to public opinion. But if public opinion, if the opinion of Babylon itself, is on the *side* of these vices, if the moral

practice of society has crystallised them into custom and the leaders of fashion have fanned them into favour, the man who resists them will require the spirit of a hero.

✓ The second scene opens ; and it is a change of environment. The first revealed Daniel at the banquet ; this reveals Daniel in the study. The trial of the flesh has been succeeded by a trial of the intellect. He is poring over a problem. Nebuchadnezzar has had a dream. He has summoned what would now be called the Fellows of the Royal Society to interpret that dream. But he has accompanied the invitation with a threat ; all who fail are to be put to death. Now, a threat has efficacy only where you want to restrain—not where you wish to quicken. Its influence is distinctively a restraining influence—it can bind the hand, it can bridle the tongue, it can bar the footsteps. It can also bind, bridle and bar the intellect. But, suppose your object is, like Nebuchadnezzar's, to give *rein* to the intellect, the threat is in its wrong sphere. If the teacher says to a class of schoolboys, ' A single error in spelling

will involve a severe flogging,' the thing involved will be almost a certainty. Probably every one of these boys will get his penalty. And why so? Not because the threat has proved powerless, but because it has been powerful in restraining the intellect. It has clouded the mental vision; it has dimmed the memory; it has diverted the attention; it has prevented the concentration of resolve. Nebuchadnezzar, for his purpose, did the worst thing he could have done.

Now, Daniel was one of this Royal Society, and was therefore under the threat of the king. Reading the narrative in my own way, I understand that *one* could save the *Society*. Several of the members had already failed; but as long as one remained untried there was hope for all. Daniel sets himself to solve the problem and to save his brethren. I do not suppose his colleagues did not try along with him; but Daniel alone succeeded. The question is, why? Was it because he was more learned than the rest—more skilled in Chaldean mysteries than the Chaldeans? If you read the narrative

thus, you miss the point. That which turned the scale between Daniel and his colleagues was courage. The others were less courageous than he. They had the threat before them and it paralysed them. It bound their talents in a napkin; it kept them from clear seeing. I do not think we are adequately aware of the presence of this law. It is my opinion that in the sphere of practical judgment humanity errs less from want of intellect than from want of nerve. There have been more prizes lost through excitement than through deficiency; there have been more examinations unsuccessful through fear than through unpreparedness. We speak of the impulsiveness of youth. Its impulsiveness is its anxiety, its distrust of the future moment. That is why it is unable to wait. Its impetuosity is not want of patience but want of confidence. Its temerity comes from its timidity. It speaks sharply when it is shy. It acts foolishly when it is flurried. It speculates rashly when it fears ruin. If it had more courage it would have more success.

Now, what is the cause of Daniel's courage? Why is it that he, at a time when his life was threatened, was able to sit down and calmly study a problem? Was it that he had been gifted with an extraordinary amount of coolness? Was it because his nerves were constitutionally still? Was it because he had expunged from his nature all the elements of passion? No; it was because there had entered into his soul a *new* element of passion. Daniel had ceased to fear for his life because he had begun to fear for something else—the lives of others. What made him study the problem was not the instinct of self-preservation but the instinct of benevolence. He knew that upon the success of its solution the lives of the whole Royal Society depended. His desire was to save the Royal Society, to be the redeemer of his fellow men. His courage was the absence of personal fear; but it was reached by an impersonal fear. It is only *personal* fear that weakens intellectual effort; the anxiety for others is a quickener of the judgment. Daniel escaped from individual trepidation

and all the mental mists that accompany it; but he did so by entering into a trepidation which was *not* individual—a terror for the fate of others, a dread which came from the pulsations of the heart of his brother man and filled him with the intensity of sorrows not his own.

The truth is—paradoxical as it may sound—the difference between human courage and animal courage lies purely in this, that the one is weighted and the other reckless. Human courage in one direction springs from cowardice in another direction, and this is its glory. Your bravery in any cause is exactly proportionate to the fear which makes you undertake that cause. Daniel had got rid of his own dread by becoming weighted with the dread for others. Nobody was more convinced than Daniel of the difference between animal courage and human courage. More than any of the Jewish prophets he had before him the ideal of manliness. He saw with the eye of the spirit the dynasties of earth pass by—each imitating the courage of some animal form. He saw the lion—the courage that roars, the

bear—the courage that rends, the panther—the courage that springs; and then he saw one 'like unto a son of man' who received a permanent kingdom. What he beheld breaking on the ages was a new ideal of bravery—that ideal which has received its culmination and its type in the Cross of Calvary. Calvary was the bravest deed ever done in this world; but it was the product of fear. Is it not written, 'He was heard in the thing He feared'—liberated from the dread that His sorrows might prove in vain. Calvary is the courage of love—the courage of the mother for that child of hers who is immured in the burning house; it is fearless through the very strength of its impersonal fear. The crowning glory of Daniel will ever be that he aspired to a courage like that of the Son of Man.

3 I come now to the third stage in the trial of Daniel's courage—the trial of the spirit as distinguished from that of the flesh and that of the mind. When the first scene opened we found Daniel at the banquet. When the second scene opened we found him in the

study. When the third scene opens we find him in the spot which ever since has been inseparably associated with his name—the den of lions. His trial in this case was distinctively a religious trial. A singular decree had been promulgated by the court of Babylon. Prompted by jealousy of the rising Jewish favourite, a powerful Jewish faction persuaded the weak Darius to test his loyalty by threatening his religion. They procured the passing of a law which enjoined on every man abstinence from prayer during the entire space of thirty days, and, as the penalty of transgression, sentenced every delinquent to the den of lions. You will observe, this was to Daniel essentially a trial of the spirit. It was a command to give up thinking—that particular form of thinking which was his very life and atmosphere—the exercise of devotion. The trial of the spirit is the command to lie passive—the imprisonment of vital action. You will observe, too, that the affliction imposed on Daniel's spiritual life had its sting in the same cause—the command to lie passive.



The den of lions is a special kind of sorrow—a kind of sorrow which belongs exclusively to the innermost life; and, as it recurs again and again in human experience, we may well consider its character.

There are two kinds of affliction in this world—labour and heavy-ladenness. The former is the necessity to work; the latter is the necessity to fold the hands. The Bible Gallery has the type of each. Its type of the first is David; its type of the second is Daniel. The extreme antithesis to Daniel in the den of lions is David in the fight with Goliath. It is the difference between active and passive courage. David is in the presence of two armies; Daniel is sealed up in a cave, alone. David has a sling and a stone; Daniel can say 'Nothing in my hand I bring.' David has the stimulus of romance; Daniel is in the depths of prose. David has a human antagonist; Daniel is at the mercy of dumb circumstances. David requires the force of the arm; Daniel needs the fortitude of the soul.

Now, of these two spheres, the den is the

more trying; and it is so by reason of its passiveness. The heart never needs so much strength as when it is waiting for the blow. I may have only a sling and a stone, yet, if I am allowed to use them, I have, for the time, a sedative. But if my task is simply to bear, if mine is only the part of the invalid, if the lions are all within my own den, if my pain is not helping the world nor is even seen by the world, if the circumstances that struggle with me are speechless and declare not the purpose of their own onset, then indeed I miss the Philistines, I miss Goliath, I miss the destiny of David.

But there is one point about Daniel's trial which, so far as I know, has not received attention. Has it ever struck any one that, with all its bitterness, it is the embodiment of that very truth which he was specially sent to reveal. The scene in the cave of Darius is the acted parable of Daniel's whole teaching. What is this den of lions but the symbol and sequel of his own prophecy! Did he not see one like unto a son of man prevailing over the lion, the bear and the panther! Did he not

behold the kingdom of humanity put to silence the roaring of the forest! What is the picture of this solitary man dominating a den of lions but the picture of what *creation* reveals! Let us consider the marvel of this fourth kingdom, this human kingdom.

Man has been dropped into the cave late in the afternoon. The cave is already filled with creatures of intense ferocity. From any physical point of view man is vastly inferior. So far as outward equipment goes he is no match for the denizens of the den. What is to become of this frail structure? It has been hermetically sealed in an inclosure for which it is not suited. It has found there, already in possession, creatures eminently suited—keener of sense, fleetier of step, louder of cry, fiercer of passion, stronger of build. Will it have any chance in the struggle—this fragile form, this insignificant force? Yes; and it has won. Daniel has conquered the lions, has made them shut their mouths. By the very consciousness of superiority, the meek have inherited the earth. Without striving or crying, without

raging or roaring, without even lifting up his voice, Daniel has stood conqueror in the cave; and the lion has been silent, and the bear has been docile, and the leopard has been content to lie down. The life apparently the most poor in spirit has received the kingdom.

Whence this unexpected pre-eminence? I have said that it comes from a consciousness of superiority. But whence came that? Within the cave man is not superior; where does he get his consciousness that he is above the lions? Let Daniel answer. He says that, before receiving the kingdom, the form in the likeness of man 'came to the Ancient of days.' He means that the secret of his power was an influence *outside* the cave—his religion. He was the only creature that made an approach to the Eternal. Of all within the den, he alone bent the knee—came to the Ancient of days. To give up prayer even for a month was to Daniel a more dangerous experiment than to enter without physical weapons into the den Darius had prepared for him. His courage is *again* the fruit of his fear. It is this which

makes it superior to the courage of the lions. Mere recklessness might have given way in the unromantic solitude, in the war without witnesses, in the struggle without spectators. But the courage that is born not of carelessness but of care, the courage that is bred not of fearlessness but of fear, the courage that is inflamed not by instinct but by reason—this is indifferent either to crowd or to solitude. The courage distinctive of man is brave from what it dreads, strong by what it shrinks from. It meets the lions because it flies from the lepers; it endures the furnace of fire that it may escape the winter frost. Therefore it is independent of excitement; it heeds not the curtain's fall. It can endure in solitude; it can shine at midnight. It can remain in the heart of Daniel when the cave is sealed by a stone and he is alone with the lions.

I THANK thee, O Lord, for the courage  
and the kingdom of the Son of Man.  
I thank Thee that the still small voice has

conquered the thunder, the earthquake and the fire. I thank Thee that Thou hast revealed to men a new ideal of bravery—a bravery born of fear. In the old kingdoms the lion and the lamb were separate; daring could not dwell beside shrinking. But now that *Thy* kingdom has come, the lion can lie down with the lamb—courage and fear can embrace each other. I would not ask of Thee the courage of recklessness or the courage of despair or the courage of conquered feeling; make me brave by my fears, O Lord! Let me see the dangers of Babylon! Let me gaze on its sins and sorrows! Let me follow its famished crowds! Let me look on its struggling millions! Let me pity its children untended, its youth unguided, its men unfit for survival! Let me tremble for its sick without succour, its weary without welcome, its erring without exhortation, its ruined without rescue, its feeble without friends, its fallen without fellowship, its guilty without a glance at their God! May their danger make me dauntless, may their peril give me power; may I be brave by their

brokenness! May their cry give me courage,  
their struggle bring me strength, their pain  
make me potent, their need lend me nerve,  
their burden send me boldness, their wrongs  
reverberate like war-notes in my heart! Then  
shall it be said, 'Thy gentleness has made thee  
great'; then shall the lion flourish by the  
strength of the lamb!









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